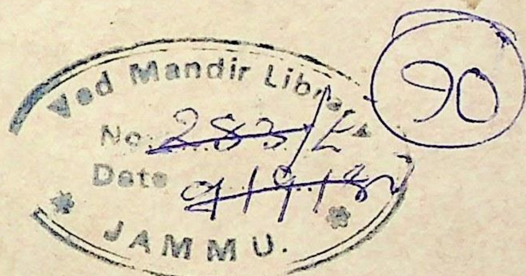
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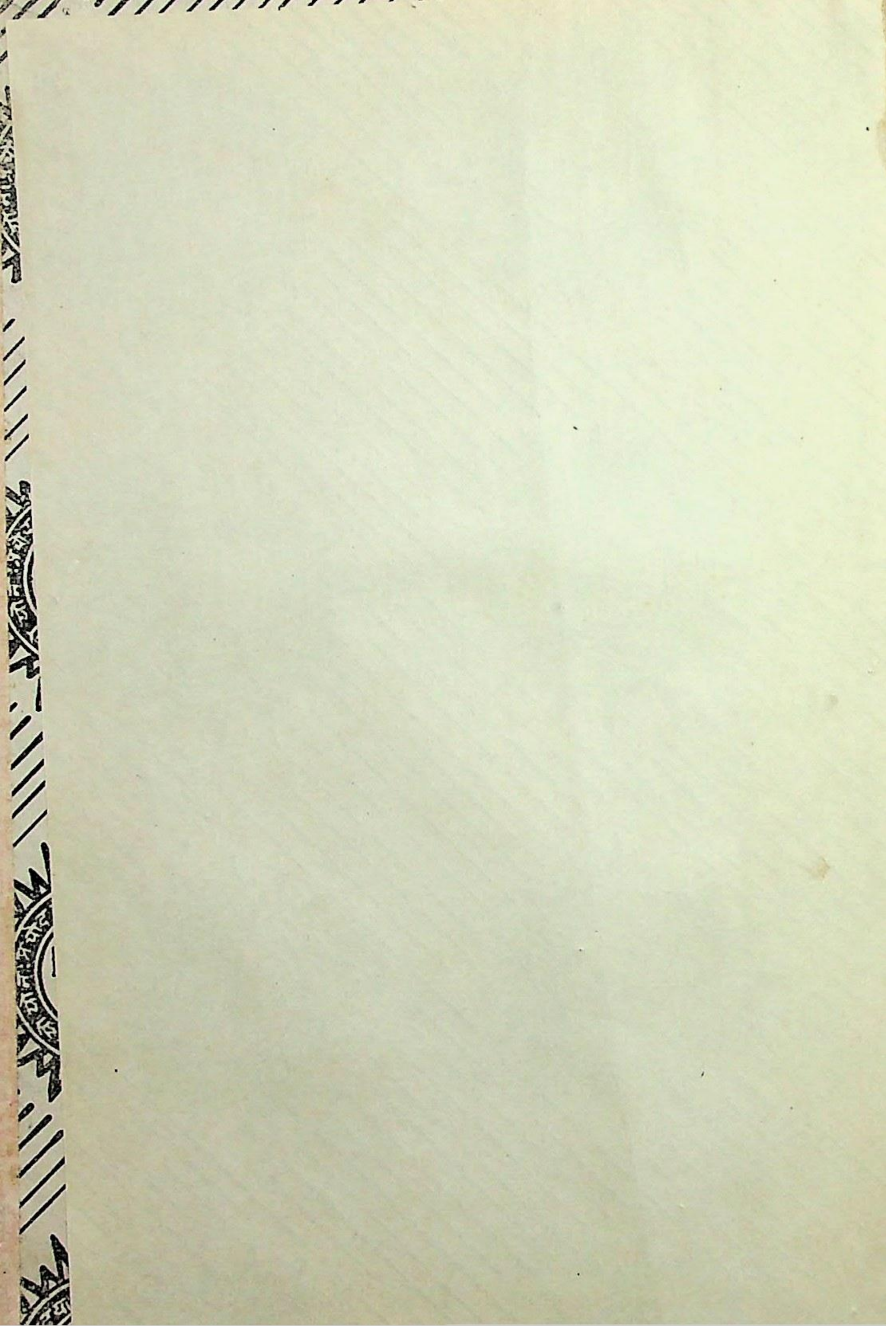
HIS PHILOSOPHY AND HIS SPIRITUAL PATH



BAHADUR MAL





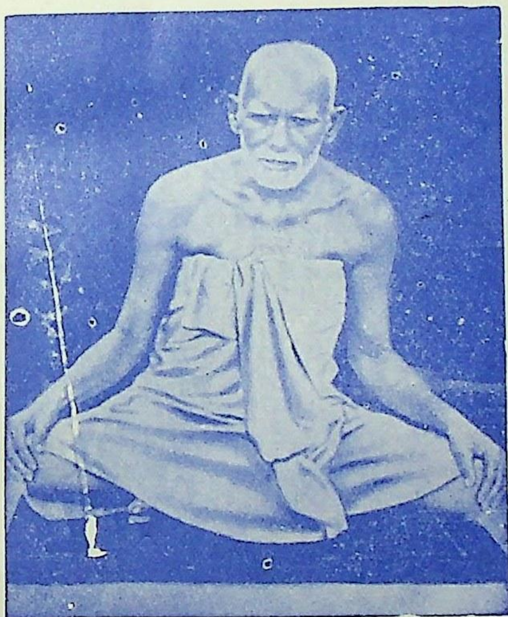


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DEDICATED TO

THE SACRED MEMORY OF



Svāmī Sarvadānand Ji

(1859—1942)



VOLUME XXXIV

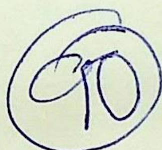
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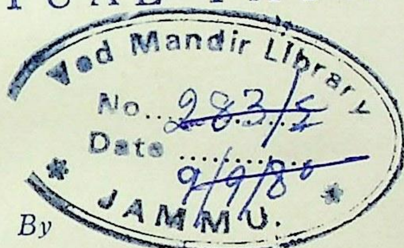
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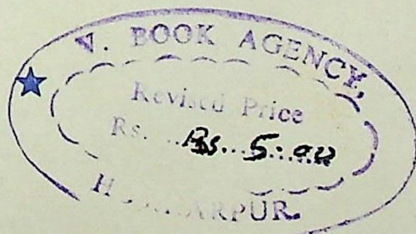
HIS PHILOSOPHY AND HIS SPIRITUAL PATH





By

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The General Editor's Note

1. *Svāmī Sarvadānand jī*

Svāmī Sarvadānandjī to whose sacred memory the present series is dedicated, was born in 1859 at Bari Basi, a small town near Hoshiārpur in the Panjāb. He came of a family that had already produced a number of learned scholars and able physicians. He received his school education at Hariānā, being another small town at some distance from his birth-place. From his early life, he felt great interest in religious observances and a strong urge for associating himself with saintly persons, devoted to religion. He married, but his household life was cut short, soon after, by the death of his wife. He did not marry a second time, for his keen interest in the pursuit of religion led him, instead, to leave his hearth and home for good so that he might be able to move about freely in search of true saints who could guide him on that path. It was in the course of those wanderings that he once came into contact with a follower of Svāmī Dayānandjī and had from him the gift of a copy of *Satyārtha-Prakāśa* (Light of Truth), the well-known master-piece from the pen of the said master mind. Through the study of that classic, he was moved to the innermost recesses of his heart and, under that inspiration, set out on a life long mission of selfless service of humanity. For full forty-six years, right up to the end

of his earthly sojourn which he reached in 1942, he moved on from place to place, preaching, through his own conduct, the importance of right thought and deed. He loved all alike but extended his warm embrace, particularly, to Harijans, being the down-trodden of the caste hierarchy. The caste people hurled at him, out of spite, the nickname of 'Chamāraguru' (Teacher of Cobblers), which he accepted as a compliment.

2. *The Memorial.*

Svāmī Sarvadānandjī was associated with our Institute organisation as a Founder Trustee and an Executive Member. He took keen interest in its work and did all he could to help this cause. It was as an humble expression of its gratitude for that long and valuable association that the Institute decided to set up, in his sacred memory, a department of universal cultural study and publication. A special fund to the tune of over Rs. 60,000/- was raised by public subscription for this purpose by the middle of 1947. But, soon after, the Institute suffered, in the wake of the Partition of Panjāb, a huge loss of its assets worth several lakhs of rupees. Since then, it has settled down at Hoshiārpur where it has made strenuous efforts towards its rehabilitation. When, in 1950, it succeeded in setting up its new printing press, it duly accorded top priority to the establishment of the aforesaid memorial department and started the present series under the auspices of the same. Thirty-three volumes have been issued in this series before the present one which is the thirty-fourth.

3. *The Present Work.*

Principal Bahadur Mal is already known to the readers of this series through three previous works from his pen, namely, "*Mental Health in Theory and Practice*", *A Story of Indian Culture*" and *The Religion of the Buddha and its Relation to Upanisadic Thought* which have been published herein as the Volumes XII, XVIII and XXVII, respectively. The present work embodies the result of our learned author's long and laborious study, coupled with deep and analytic reflection, in the life-history, personality and teachings of Shri Krishna—that indomitable and immortal wonder-worker, hero and sage of India's glorious past, warrior, statesman and philosopher, all in one.

4 It is my pleasant duty to close this note with an expression of my sincere thanks to my colleagues in the Publication and the Printing Departments of our Institute through whose hearty co-operation this volume is now seeing the light of the day.

Sadhu Ashram, VISHVA BANDHU
HOSHIARPUR,
27th September, 1960.

To My Children

Preface

I have tried, in this book, to present the spiritual teachings of Shri Krishna in an easily intelligible form. In the first part, an attempt has been made to delineate the character and personality of Shri Krishna, and to point out the great importance of *Bhagawad Gītā* for people of a religious bent of mind. It appears that the teachings of Sri Krishna were handed down from generation to generation by oral tradition, till a gifted scholar gave them their present form in the sixth century B.C or even earlier. There is every reason to believe that the *Bhagawad Gītā* contains the substance of religious doctrines which Krishna, the great religious teacher of the Mahabharata period, taught in his life time.

In the second part of the book, the philosophical conceptions, contained in the *Bhagawad Gītā*, have been explained. The third part gives, more or less, a comprehensive account of the spiritual **path.** I shall feel happy if the book serves the purpose for which it is meant and helps all lovers of the *Bhagawad Gītā* to understand its essential teachings.

The *Bhagawad Gītā* is regarded, by a very large number of people both in the East and the West, as containing the quintessence of spiritual knowledge. perhaps no other book has won such popularity among religious-minded people as the *Bhagawad Gītā*. In a small compass, the author has succeeded in giving almost all the elements of religion such as non-attachment and equal-mindedness ; love, charity and

purity of life ; meditation and concentration ; sacrifice and disinterested action ; devotion, self surrender and worship of the Divine.

For centuries people have found solace and spiritual satisfaction in the teachings of this great scripture, and the interest remains as fresh as ever, even in modern times. There is no wonder, therefore, if new commentaries on *Bhagawad Gītā* continue to be published, and read in every part of the world.

I hope, in all humility, that, this book will be found useful. No difficult or knotty point in the *Bhagawad Gītā* has been slurred or lightly passed over. An effort has been made to expound all the important aspects of the teaching in a systematic and lucid manner, with particular emphasis on the aspect of spiritual discipline or Sadhana which has been dealt with in greater fulness and comprehensiveness.

I have greatly benefited from the writings and commentaries of great savants and scholars such as Sri Aurobindo, Shri B. G. Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, Shri Jñanadev, Dr. Radha Krishanan and many others. I am under a deep debt of gratitude to all of them.

I thankfully appreciate the help which Pandit Dev Datta Shastri and other friends in the V. V. R. Institute have rendered in the printing of this book.

This book, like its predecessors, owes a great deal to the encouragement and active interest of Pandit Vishva Bandhu, General Editor of the Sarvadanand Universal Series. I am very grateful to him.

HOSHIARPUR
Dated : 1-9-1960.

BAHADUR MAL

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HIS PHILOSOPHY AND HIS SPIRITUAL PATH

INTRODUCTION

We shall try, in this book, to present the teachings of Śri Kṛṣṇa, one of the great religious leaders of India. At an early stage of its cultural growth, India produced, one after the other, two great religious teachers, Śri Kṛṣṇa and Gautama Buddha who, in course of time, became known all over the world. Since then many new religious sects have appeared in the country, and there have emerged on the Indian scene, from time to time, a number of religious teachers of great renown. But if we examine their teachings carefully, we shall find that they are all indebted, in various ways, to the teachings of these two great apostles of religious truth. The numerous religious doctrines which were preached in India in later times, are, to our mind, simply variations on the ancient themes contained in the teachings of Kṛṣṇa and Buddha. Between themselves, these two teachers place before us all the elements of religion such as renunciation, non-attachment, equanimity, disinterested action, faith in God and Moral Law, meditation and contemplation, devotion and self-surrender, and moral and spiritual values like love, non-violence, truthfulness, self-control and purity. All later doctrines may

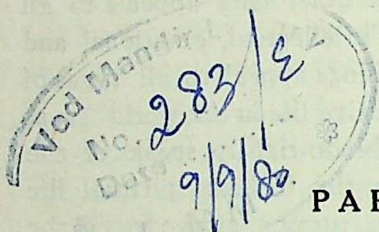
be regarded, without meaning any disrespect to their teachers, as different presentations, according to the needs of the times, of these original religious insights.

The teachings of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are embodied in the *Bhagawad Gītā*. This great religious book has won the spiritual allegiance of practically all Hindus, to whatever religious denomination they might belong, and so it can be rightly described as a common religious scripture of all of them. Its fame has travelled to many civilised countries outside India, and its spiritual appeal is so great that it has been translated into almost all the important languages of the world.

The religion of the Buddha was mainly addressed to men of renunciation who naturally form a microscopic minority in every country. He, no doubt, tried to give us a religion without metaphysical dogmas, around which endless controversies have raged in all countries in all ages. He also laid the much-needed emphasis upon the qualities of love and compassion and the necessity of being good and pure in thought, word and action. But his leaning towards renunciation gave a one-sided solution of the problem of life. As a writer puts it, "He favoured detached contemplation in preference to disinterested action, passive forbearance of wrong for the sake of peace instead of active opposition to it in the interest of justice, exaltation of Nirvāṇa or extinction over Nirmāṇa or creation." In Buddhism, stress is laid on contemplation and mental discipline rather than on doing something by

overt action. Kṛṣṇa on the other hand appeals to all sides of human nature; intellectual, emotional and volitional and so his teachings appeal to all types of men, whether living an active life in the world or as spiritual recluses. Śri Aurobindo rightly speaks of the *Gītā* as a practical guide to the highest spiritual life which does not consist in turning away from the activities of life but in performing them as one's contribution to the divine purpose on earth.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa holds a unique position in Hinduism. Among the orthodox Hindus he is looked upon as an incarnation of God and is worshipped as such. Many Hindus do not accept the incarnation theory, but they nevertheless regard Śrī Kṛṣṇa with deep veneration on account of his eminence both as a statesman and as a religious teacher. His spiritual teachings, embodied principally as they are in the *Bhagawad Gītā*, form the basic ideas of Hinduism and, as such, help us to understand the spirit which has inspired this great religious and social system during all the centuries after the Christian era or just preceding it.



PART I

Śrī Kṛṣṇa :

(1) His character & personality
(2) The Bhagawad Gītā

Chapter I

Date of Kṛṣṇa

Śri Kṛṣṇa played a prominent part in the Mahābhārata war. He, therefore, belongs to that momentous period of Indian history. A number of scholars have tried to arrive at some conclusion in regard to the date of the Mahābhārata war, on the basis of astronomical data found in the epic itself : but the same data have led different scholars to different conclusions. Many scholars, however, making use of the Paurāṇic tradition about the number of kings of different dynasties that reigned from the time of king Adhisima Kṛṣṇa (great-grand-son of Janamejaya) to that of Mahāpadma in 350 B.C., and regarding one generation to last on an average for a period of twenty years, generally agree that the war took place at about 1400 B. C. This conclusion has been arrived at after taking into account the slightly varying accounts found in the *Purāṇas* and other

relevant literature. K. T. Telang also expresses the same view about the date of *Mahābhārata* on the basis of linguistic and literary evidence found in the *Bhagawad Gītā*, (see introduction to his translation of *Bhagawad Gītā*). There are, however, some scholars, according to whom the Mahābhārata war was fought in the beginning of the Kaliyuga which is believed to have set in about 5000 years ago. This would put the date of *Mahābhārata* and Śrī Kṛṣṇa at about 3000 B. C. (C. V. Vaidya : Epic India). The majority view, however, as already indicated, is in favour of regarding 1400 B. C. as the date of the Mahābhārata war, which seems to be a reasonable view founded on the genealogy of kings as given in the *Purāṇas*.

We get materials for constructing the life of Śri Kṛṣṇa mostly from the *Purāṇas* and the *Mahābhārata*. The early life of Kṛṣṇa is recorded in a number of *Purāṇas* such as the *Brahma Purāṇa*, the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, the *Brahmvaivarta Purāṇa*, the *Bhāgawat Purāṇa* and some others. Out of these the *Bhāgawata Purāṇa* gives the complete life of Kṛṣṇa ; other *Purāṇas* mainly relate the earlier episodes of his life in a lesser or greater detail. The *Puraṇas*, as a rule, do not say much about Kṛṣṇa as a great statesman, or a great warrior, or a great religious teacher. They are chiefly concerned with describing his childhood and his love episodes, most of which, on closer examination appear to be the outcome of pure imagination. The value of the *Purāṇas*, therefore,

for historical purposes, is not very great. Most of the stories of the childhood of Kṛṣṇa and of his youth given in the *Purāṇas* are the outcome of exaggerated religious sentiment and devotion and it is, therefore, difficult to be sure of their historical value. About many of these stories, we find different versions in the different *Purāṇas.* We can, therefore, count mainly upon the authority of the *Mahābhārata* for whatever materials of historical value can be obtained on the life of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

But the *Mahābhārata* describes mainly those incidents of his life which have a direct bearing on the main story of the great war. These incidents took place after he came in contact with the Pāṇḍavas, for the first time, on the occasion of the Svayambara of Draupadi. In the *Mahābhārata*, of course, at certain places, brief references are made to incidents pertaining to his early life, for instance Śiśupāla in his denunciation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa at the Rajasūya Yajña of King Yudhiṣthira contemptuously refers to him, as a cow-herd as well as to some of his boy-hood incidents. In *Mahābhārata* XII. 3. 39. there is a passage that Kṛṣṇa of Gokula who slew Kansa was a great friend of the Pāṇḍavas, and helped them to kill Jarāsandha, the father-in-law of Kansa.

We come across references to Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva in Pānaṇi's *Aṣṭādhyāyi* (about 400 B.C.) as well as in the commentary of Patañjali on the same, in the account of India by the Greek ambassador Magasthenes (300 B. C.) and in inscriptions found at Ghasundi

(200 B.C.) Besnagar (180 B.C.) and at Nanaghat cave (180 B.C.). These references do not tell us much about the life of Kṛṣṇa but they help us to fix the time when Kṛṣṇa began to be worshipped as an incarnation of God in India.

We may refer here to the view of certain scholars that the Kṛṣṇa of the *Mahābhārata* is not the same person as the Kṛṣṇa of the *Purāṇas*. According to them, it appears strange that while all sorts of stories, relevant or irrelevant to its main theme, are narrated at length in the *Mahābhārata*, the story of Kṛṣṇa's childhood should find no place in it except in the form of bare hints here and there. Of course, later on, a supplement in the form of *Hari-vanśa* was added, giving a detailed account of the early life of Kṛṣṇa ; but it is outside the main stream of the *Mahābhārata* text and is a sort of *Purāṇa* in itself. "In this connection" says S. N. Tadpatrikar, "it is interesting to note that *Viṣṇu-sahasranāma* at XIII, 254, does not contain any synonym illustrating any incident of Kṛṣṇa's Purāṇic life, though it mentions his connection with the Yādavas and such other things that are found in the *Mahābhārata* text too. There is again a collection of hundred names at XII, 42, directly addressed to Kṛṣṇa by Yudhiṣṭhira but here too, we find only his identification with the God-head and no reference to his Purāṇic life." (B. O. R. Institute Annals, Poona Vol. X, pp. 330-331). It is said further that the character which is ascribed to Kṛṣṇa in the Purāṇas is

altogether unbecoming of the great sage who, later on, became the teacher of such lofty thoughts as are embodied in *Bhagawad Gītā.* and so according to these scholars the two Kṛṣṇas cannot possibly be the same person.

Sir R. G. Bhandārkar is also of the opinion that the cow-herd Kṛṣṇa of the *Purāṇas* is different from the Vṛṣṇi prince Vasudeva of the *Mahābhārata.* According to him "the story of Kṛṣṇa's boyhood in the Gokula was unknown till about the beginning of the Christian era. The *Hari-vanśa* which is a chief authority for it, contains the word Dinãra corresponding to the Latin word Dinarius and consequently it must have been written about the 3rd Century of the Christian era. Sometime before that the story of Kṛṣṇa's boyhood must have been current." (*Vaiṣṇavism* and *Śaivism*, p. 36). Sir Bhandārkar holds the view that Kṛṣṇa was most probably, the god of a nomadic cow-herd tribe known as the Abhiras who lived in a scattered manner in the region extending from the vicinity of Mathura in the east to that of Dwārkā in the West. Stories about his childhood exploits, current among this nomadic tribe, might have afterwards been incorporated in the *Purāṇas,* after the worship of Kṛṣṇa was adopted in Hinduism.

The view of Bhandārkar and of other writers in regard to the exotic character of cow-herd Kṛṣṇa çannot be accepted for various reasons. There are, in the *Mahābhārata* itself, passages in which Vasudeva is described as Kṛṣṇa of the Yādava and Vṛṣṇi tribes

of Mathura (*Mahābhārata* I, 186. 12, II, 14, 20). In one of the Jātaka tales known as the Ghat Jātaka, Vasudeva is called by the name of Kānha (Kṛṣṇa) and the same fact is stated in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* on Pāṇini. In *Chhāndogya Upaniṣad* Kṛṣṇa is called Devaki Putra after the name of his mother Devaki. It was done, probably, to distinguish him from his brother Balarāma who was born of Rohini, the second wife of Vasudeva, and for that reason called Rauhiṇeya. There is nothing to make it improbable that Vāsudeva the Vṛṣṇi prince was in his infancy brought up in a cow-herd settlement at Gokula and then at Brindāban after the settlement had moved on to it.

As regards the stories of the love of cow-herd maidens for Kṛṣṇa, there is no doubt that the *Purāṇas* have indulged in grossly exaggerating and distorting the facts as they really might have been. It appears from all accounts, that Kṛṣna was a lovely child and, later on, a handsome youth, and so he was the centre of attraction for the men and women of the place, but the view that any doubtful relations existed between cow-herd maidens and the youthful Kṛṣṇa who had not yet emerged into complete manhood, would be the height of fantastic imagination. Even the character of Rādhā was the invention of a very late writer, for we do not find it even in the *Bhāgawata Purāṇa* which is said to have been composed near about the 8th century A. D. We also know that Kṛṣṇa never cared to return to Brindāban after he had left it for Mathura, Mathura is only at a distance of a few miles from

Brindāban and if there had been any attraction for him at Brindāban in the form of love for the beautiful cow-herd maidens, he would have surely liked to pay frequent visits to the place.

Chapter II

The Character and Personality of Kṛṣṇa

The Hindu mind has a great admiration for the spirit of renunciation. It holds, in deep veneration, the holy men who give up the good things of the world, and spend their time in meditation and austere living ; but it is noteworthy that in spite of its partiality for holiness and renunciation, it pays its highest tribute to men who lead lives of perfection, while living in the world and faithfully discharging their prescribed duties. Of such men Kṛṣṇa occupies the foremost place in the affections of the Hindus. He represents the well-integrated life at its best, rich in emotion, thought and action. To a Hindu the life of Kṛṣṇa stands for the highest level of human achievement, the model for mankind to follow. He was remarkable at all stages of life ; as a child, as a youth, as a mature man and as he was in the later phases of his life. The life of Rāma, in comparison, is more austere and awe-inspiring. We can deeply revere him ; but, as a rule, he stands on a high pedestal of nobility and greatness, and we can only bow to him from a distance in profound admiration and devotion, or can at best touch his feet with

our bowed heads. But we can feel quite at home with Kṛṣṇa, can play with him and dance with him. He is beloved of men and women ; of the young and the old alike. While with him, they forget his greatness and regard him as one of them, a companion, a friend, and a helper on whom they can always depend in their hour of trial and adversity. Now and then his greatness is brought home to them in a sudden flash but generally it remains in the back-ground while his jovialness, simplicity, love and humour occupy the main stage. His greatness is inwardly felt by everybody, and they all feel safe under its shadow, but it does not obtrude itself upon any one.

While greatness in action and wisdom can appeal only to a few wise men, beauty, love, simplicity and heroism can attract the wise and the simple-minded alike. A rich emotional life is a source of attraction to every body, and Kṛṣṇa was an embodiment of all great emotions. This aspect of his life began to manifest itself from an early age, and held spell-bound all those who came under his influence. The cow-herd men and women of Brindāban were drawn to him by his physical charm as well as by his innocent boyish pranks and gay, affectionate behaviour. And this power to fascinate people in all human relationships remained with him throughout life. Great though he was as a warrior, as a statesman and as a religious teacher, he could yet diffuse the charm of his personality on all people who were brought in relation with him in one way or another. "His relations with

the cow-herd companions of his early age, his foster parents, his college friend Sudāmā, with Vyāsa, Nārada, Arjuna, Bhīma, Bhīśma, with his aunt Kuntī, with Draupadī, with Vidura, Uddhava, Akrūra, with his elder brother Balrāma, with his different sons and daughters and grandchildren, with his wives severally—Rukmaṇi and Satyabhāmā chiefly among them—each of these numerous beautiful and complex phases and aspects of love emotion makes a subject of interesting, instructive and elevating psychological studies—and is dealt with in the literature of the many schools and sects of Bhakti, which have taken birth and grown up in the subsequent centuries.[1]

When Sudāmā, the destitute Brāhmāṇa went to Dwārkā to see Kṛṣṇa, under the persuasion of his wife, he was doubtful whether he would meet with a ready welcome or would even be recognized by his great and illustrious college friend of old days. But he soon found himself overwhelmed with love and kindness from all sides. He was amazed to see that he was being treated by Kṛṣṇa as his equal, and it was not simply a put-up affair. It was an exhibition of spontaneous affection flowing from the heart of Kṛṣṇa for his old friend who had fallen upon bad days. Sudāmā was sent back with wealth enough to keep him comfortable for the rest of his life. The loving treatment which Kṛṣṇa meted out to Sudāmā was not a solitary case ; it was symbolic of his deep love for mankind in general. Those who met him felt the

1. Dr. Bhagawan Das : Krishna, p. 93.

charm of his great personality and the warmth of his unbounded kind-heartedness. It is no wonder, therefore, if the charm has continued unabated through all subsequent centuries and the name of Kṛṣṇa evokes unusual love and emotion in the present as much as it did in the past.

But Kṛṣṇa was equally a relentless fighter in the cause of justice and righteousness. He waged, throughout his life, incessant war against tyrants and evil-doers, and destroyed them. So while the people as a rule loved him, the cruel and the evil-minded kings were afraid of him. In the *Mahābhārata*, we find, in detail, the part played by Kṛṣṇa in the great war. There is also, in it, a description of the battle which he fought against Sālva, the king of Sobhnagar who attacked Dwārkā, while Kṛṣṇa was away attending the Rājasūya Yajña of King Yudhiṣthira. Sālwa was defeated by the Yādavas under the command of one of the sons of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In order to prevent any further attack by Sālva, Kṛṣṇa marched with a large army into his kingdom and completely routed him. Sālva was killed in the battle and Kṛṣṇa returned to Dwārkā.

During the Rājasūya Yajña, the great veteren Bhīṣma, while speaking of the great qualities of Kṛṣṇa, declared that there was hardly a king, among those present in the Yajña, who had not been defeated by Kṛṣṇa at one time or another. In Droṇa Parva XI Dhṛtarāṣṭra himself recites the great martial feats of Kṛṣṇa. After referring to his deeds of prowess during

his stay at Brindāban while he was yet a mere boy, Dhrtrāsṭra makes a passing mention of the destruction of Kansa, Śiśupāl, Sālva and of the defeat of a large number of other kings. "The Angas, the Vangas, the Kaliṅgas, the Māgadhas, the Kāśis, the Kośalas, the Vatsyas, the Gārgias, the Kārūṣas and Pauṇḍras, these all he vanquished in battle. The Avantis, the southerners, the Mountaineers.........the Kaurvojas, the Vatadhanas, the Cholas, the Pāṇḍas, O Sanjaya, the Malvas difficult of being vanquished, the Kasas arrived from diverse realms, as also the Śakas and the Yavanas with their followers, were all vanquished by him of eyes like lotus patels.........we have never heard, that there is any one among the kings, who has not been vanquished by Kṛṣṇa." Allowing for any exaggeration that there might possibly be in this description of the battles waged by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, we are left in no doubt, that he was unequalled, through the length and breadth of the country, in martial valour and skill in arms. And yet he was so humble, so noble and full of love for mankind in general.

At many places in the *Mahābhārata*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has been praised for truthfulness and purity of life. Just before the great war began, Yudhiṣṭhira, on seeing the mighty hordes of the Kuru army, expressed his apprehension to Arjuna about the outcome of the war. Arjuna consoled him by saying that victory does not belong to the mighty and strong but it comes to those who combine with strength the qualities of truth, compassion, piety and righteousness, and therefore

victory was certain to be where Kṛṣṇa was. Kṛṣṇa is thus held up as a symbol of truth, compassion and nobility. But there are also, in the *Mahābhārata*, stories of deceit and falsehood said to have been practised by him against enemies in the great war. We want to say a few words on this subject. It is more than likely that the attribution of fraud and deceit to Kṛṣṇa in some of the episodes of war is a pure fabrication introduced into the main story in order to malign him. It is unbelievable that Kṛṣṇa who, in point of valour and righteousness, towered above all the great heroes of *Mahābhārata*, should have so openly and crudely violated the universally accepted code of honourable warfare, as is popularly supposed. The Mahābhārata, as it is found now, was composed at different periods. A large part of it was written after Kṛṣṇa had begun to be worshipped as an incarnation of Viṣṇu by his ardent devotees. There was the rival creed of Śaivism as well, prevalent among the people. "In the *Mahābhārata*, sectarian influence has exalted both Śiva and Viṣṇu at the expense of the other : it seems clear that the Vaiṣṇavas first exercised their influence on the text, but the Śaivas later made amends by freely interpolating passages in which Śiva is exalted to the position of All-God, in a manner too strikingly parallel to the encomia of Viṣṇu to leave much doubt as to the deliberate character of the change."[1] There is no wonder if, at a later date, some enthusiastic

1. A. B. Keith. The mythology of all races. Vol. VI, p. 118-119.

follower of the rival sect or possibly some writer more partial to the Kaurvas than to the Pāṇḍavas took it into his head to introduce some additions in the story with a view to be-little the importance of the victory scored by the Pāṇḍavas, and to lower the prestige of Śri Kṛṣṇa in the eyes of his followers and admirers. We shall, shortly, adduce some evidence on this point.

We know that in a previous encounter, when Duryodhana along with Droṇa, Bhīṣma, Karṇa and other great warriors invaded the kingdom of Virāṭa, Arjuna easily defeated all of them in a single-handed combat. Having put to fight Duryodhana who was driving away the cows of Virāṭa to Hastināpur, Arjuna turned to fight against Droṇa and other heroes. Shri Rajagopalachari summarizes the fight as follows: "Arjuna carried on a wonderful fight. First he made at Karṇa and drove him from the battle-field. After that he attacked and defeated Droṇa. Seeing Droṇa standing spent with fight, Aśwatthāmā joined in the fight and attacked Arjuna, which gave Arjuna an opportunity of letting Droṇa withdraw from the field. Then there ensued a bitter struggle between Aśwatthāmā and Arjuna. When Aśwatthāmā grew weary, Kṛpa relieved him and maintained the attack against Arjuna. But Kṛpa also sustained defeat and the whole army was routed and fled in fear. Though rallied and brought back to the attack by Bhīṣma, Droṇa and others, there was no fight left in them and finally they left the field, after

a glorious fight between Bhīṣma and Arjuna, which it is said, the Gods themselves came to see." (*Mahābhārata* by C. Rajagopalachari p. 199).

But here we are told that none of these great heroes could be defeated by Arjuna in the Great Mahābhārata war except by the use of fraud and stratagem. There seems to be no doubt that some sort of conspiracy is at work here with the sole purpose of besmirching the character and reputation of Kṛṣṇa and to be-little the greatness of the Pāṇḍavas. It is really significant that the great generals of Dur· yodhana, without any exception, are described as so mighty and powerful that none of them could be defeated without the use of foul means. This, in itself, throws doubt on the authenticity of those episodes in the *Mahābhārata*. Truthfulness was a virtue which was highly prized by the people of the age. It, therefore, does not stand to reason, that the greatest man on the battle field should be making use of falsehood and deceitful practices, not once, but a number of times and in an open manner.

Even if we accept the account of the war as given in the *Mahābhārata*, a carefull reading of the same would give us a different story from what is commonly prevalent. We shall discover, therein, the real causes which led to the change of tactics, on the side of the Pāṇḍavas, against the successive generalessimoes of the Kuru army. When Bhīṣma became the first Commander-in-chief, it soon became evident that Arjuna would not, on any account, be prepared to

put his whole mettle into the fight. He respected Bhīṣma too much to desire to kill him. When he openly confessed that he would not be able to kill Bhīṣma on the battle field, it was decided that Śikhaṇḍi should take the place of Arjuna and lead the fight against Bhīṣma. Śikhaṇḍi was one of the mighty warriors in the army of the Pāṇḍavas. We find his name mentioned as one of the great Mahārathies on the side of the Pāṇḍavas, by Duryodhana himself in the first chapter of *Bhagawad Gītā*. Arjuna showed his readiness to support Śikhaṇḍi just as many great warriors of the Kuru army were giving their support to Bhīṣma. It is absolutely wrong to say that Bhīṣma refused to fight against Śikhaṇḍi. He fought against him, though his assaults were made ineffective by Arjuna who broke, one after the other, the bows of Bhīṣma, so that he could not properly defend himself against the on slaughts of Śikhaṇḍi. Ultimately an arrow shot by Śikhaṇḍi brought him to the ground and incapacitated him from further action. Here there was no question of any fraud having being practised against Bhīṣma.

Droṇa succeeded Bhīṣma as commander-in-chief of Kuru army. He had a special knowledge of the use of a certain weapon known as the celestial weapon (*Brahmāstra*), but it could be legitimately used only against those warriors who were conversant with its use and could defend themselves against it. Droṇa began to use this weapon indiscriminately against all and sundry. The result was that a regular slaughter

took place in the Pāṇḍava army. It now became a serious problem for the Pāṇḍavas to think out ways and means by which they could stop the havoc which Droṇa was doing to their army.

It was in the period of Droṇa's command that the death of Abhimanyu, the son of Arjuna was brought about in the most perfidious manner. When Abhimanyu broke up the Çakravyūha (a special form of the disposition of the army) arranged by Droṇa and entered into it, it was made impracticable for the Pāṇḍava warriors to follow Abhimanyu for his support. Even the carriage carrying bows, arrows and other implements of fighting for Abhimanyu was not allowed to pass. This was clearly against the rules. Abhimanyu fought gloriously putting to flight all those who faced him. Ultimately, five warriors including the great Karṇa, with the advice of Droṇa shamelessly attacked him from behind and broke his car and bow. (Droṇa Parva 48, 30). While he was thus left alone unarmed and exhausted, one of the sons of Duśāsana gave a blow on his head with his mace and killed him. This was the most inhuman crime committed on the battle field, and with the knowledge and consent of Droṇācharya.

It is said that when things had come to such a pass, Shri Kṛsṇa suggested to the Pāṇḍavas that it should be proclaimed loudly that Aśwatthāmā, the be-loved son of Droṇa had been killed. It is also said that when Droṇa asked Yudhiṣṭhira whether the report of the death of Aśwatthāmā was true, Yudhiṣṭhira

told him that Aśwatthāmā was dead. Now it should be clearly noted that the commonly-held belief that immediately on hearing the report of his son's death, Droṇa gave up fighting, threw down his arms and was therefore killed is not according to facts. Actually, as we find in the Mahābhārata, he went on fighting even after he had heard the news that Aśwatthāmā was killed. Bankim, the great Bengali writer, in his life of Shri Kṛṣna, expresses the opinion that the whole episode regarding the false report of the death of Aśwatthāmā seems to be a fabrication. How could a wise man like Kṛṣṇa make this suggestion, when its falsity could have been easily ascertained by Droṇa by making an enquiry about it from his own people. If Droṇa could go on fighting for a long time even after he had been apprised of the death of his son, many other warriors in the mean time, would also have heard about the report and its falsity could easily have been brought home to him. Duryodhana would not have long kept him in ignorance about the real fact. Aśwatthāmā himself could have come up to reassure his father about his continued safety. The disengaged warriors, in those days, could freely move about on the battle field. The truth seems to be that on account of continuous fighting for the last two days and nights without any rest whatsoever, the Āchārya had become exhausted. Moreover his conscience was also, all the time, upbraiding him for his breach of the recognized rules of warfare. It is recorded in the Mahābhārata that on seeing the great Brāhman sage

Droṇa engaged in the extermination of the Kshtriyas by the use of unrighteous means a number of Rishis including Viśwāmītra, Jamadagni and Bhāradwāja, appeared before him on the battle field and addressed him thus. "O Droṇa, you are fighting by foul means. Your end is near. You should now give up the use of arms. Your behaviour in using the Brahamāstra against people who do not know its use is not praise worthy". (Droṇa Prava 188). Most probably it was the voice of conscience which reproached him for the use of unfair means. He felt as if the great sages were rebuking him for his bad conduct. It is also said that Bhīma standing behind the car of Droṇa, tried to rouse the conscience of the Acharya by pointing out, in a few chosen sentences, the great slaughter which he had caused by his unrighteous ways of fighting. (Droṇa Parva 190). These things, combined with his exhaustion, completely unnerved him and made him unfit for fighting.

There is no doubt, that after the removal of Bhīṣma from the scene, Duryodhana and his great generals had begun to openly flout all rules of honourable warfare. Droṇa used his celestial weapons even against those people who could not defend themselves from them. Karṇa, Aśwatthāmā and other great warriors of the Kuru army killed Abhimanyu in a most perfidious manner. There was no question now, that the rules of warfare, on the side of the Kurus, were being honoured more in their breach than in their observance. Rules have value only if they are accepted on both sides. If one side breaks them, it become

suicidal for the other side to go on sticking to them. It is a sure way to invite defeat and disaster.

When, next, Karṇa came to the battle-field to fight against Arjuna, his car got stuck in the mud and he appealed to Arjuna in the name of fairness, to stop fighting till he had extricated his car. He was allowed to do so, but as he made the appeal in the name of fairness, Kṛṣṇa, at once, pointed out to him that he had no right to expect any mercy when he and others on his side had all along violated the rules of fighting in a most outrageous manner. The chariot of Karṇa had not been completely extricated and so it could not move about freely. He wanted a respite again but now Kṛṣṇa advised Arjuna to keep on fighting. Those who object to the propriety of this advice should remember that it was an actual war, and not a peaceful Satyāgarha, that was going on. The lives of great warriors were at stake. The alternatives were either to kill or to be killed. The important question for the Pāṇḍavas now was, whether they should, under the changed circumstances, when the Kurus were violating all rules of warfare, continue to stick to the rules and thereby invite defeat and destruction upon themselves or they were also to change their tactics in self-defence. Sometime before, Arjuna's car had also got stuck in mud, and while Kṛṣṇa was trying to take out the wheel, Karṇa had not stopped fighting, which he should have done. But now when his own car was disabled, he became self-righteous and sought shelter under the rules of warfare to which he had no right whatsoever.

After the death of Karṇa Duryodhana lost all hope of victory. He fled from the battle field and concealed himself in the waters of a lake. His place of concealment was soon discovered. When the Pāṇḍavas along with Kṛṣṇa came to the lake, Yudhiṣṭhira, in his native simplicity, suggested to Duryodhana that he could select any one of the Pāndava warriors and fight with him with any weapon of his own choice. Victory would go to the side of the warrior who defeated the other. Yudhiṣṭhira thus put the hard-won victory into a state of jeopardy once again. Everyone including Shri Kṛṣṇa strongly resented the misplaced generosity of Yudhiṣṭhira, but nothing could be done now. Duryodhana chose to fight against his old mortal enemy Bhīma with mace (Gadā) as the weapon. Duryodhana was a great expert in the use of mace. He was now fighting desperately and it appeared that victory might go to him. In this extremity Arjuna asked Kṛṣṇa what, in his view, would be the outcome of the fight between Bhīma and Duryodhana, and Kṛṣṇa told him that Duryodhana was most likely to win unless Bhīma remembered his great oath which he had solemnly taken many years ago, when Duryodhana had grievously insulted Draupadī in the presence of the whole court, by asking her to sit on his naked thigh. Bhīma could not retaliate at that time but he took an oath that he would smash the thigh of Duryodhana for this great insult. Arjuna took the hint and succeeded, by means of various

signs and gestures, in conveying to the fighting Bhīma that it was the time to fulfil his solemn oath. Bhīma lost no time in availing of the opportunity to smash with his mace the thigh of Duryodhana. Now giving a blow on the thigh was against the rules of warfare ; but the fulfilment of an oath solemnly taken was also held by the Kshatriyas of those times to be an equally important obligation.

When there is a question of life and death and the fate of a people hangs by a thread it is only great men who can make momentous decisions to which the lesser men are to faithfully submit. He would indeed by a very presumptuous person who would have the temerity to suggest that what Kṛṣṇa thought and advised on various occasions during the course of war and which made victory over the forces of evil possible, was morally reprehensible and should not have been done.

We have dealt at length with these matters, because there is a great misunderstanding in the minds of most people about their true complexion. We, however, still hold the view that many of these things did not happen as they are generally described and that there was made a deliberate attempt to paint the victory of the Pāṇḍavas with a dark brush, and that the many references to the part played by Kṛṣṇa in the *Mahābhārata* war were actuated by questionable motives.

It becomes obvious from the account of events just preceding and following the death of Duryodhana,

as given in the Śalīparva, Chapter 61. Just before his death, Duryodhana hurls abuses at Sri Kṛṣṇa to his heart's content and accuses him of all sorts of foul means during the war. The popular idea about the part played by Kṛṣṇa during the *Mahābhārata* War appears to be taken from the rabid and virulent speech of Duryodhana as narrated in this chapter. These accusations are not true, as we have already found. Undoubtedly, this part of the chapter is clearly an addition introduced into the main story by some strong partisan of the Kurus. The reply which Kṛṣṇa gives to this abusive speech of Duryodhana is not consistant with his noble character as shown at almost all places in the great Epic. Here Kṛṣṇa returns abuse for abuse and this also to an adversary who was on the point of death. A little before this he is described as having reprimanded Bhīma for being harsh and abusive to the dying Duryodhana. Now he is shown as doing the same thing himself.

The reply of Duryodhana is astonishing. He says, that he had studied the Vedas, ruled over a large kingdom, and trampled upon his enemies ; he was now dying the death of a noble Kshatṛya hero and would be soon enjoying the bliss of heaven ; and strangely enough, no sooner had he said this, than the heavenly flowers began to be showered upon him and the celestial Apsarās and Gandharvās began to sing songs of praise for him. Duryodhana, the greatest sinner and the most wicked person of his age, responsible for numberless inequities and evil deeds, is shown as being

taken to heaven as if he were the noblest and the purest human being on earth. Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna and other Pāṇḍavas are described as feeling ashamed of the evil deeds which Duryodhana ascribed to them on the eve of his death. They are made to feel ashamed for things which they had never done, while Duryodhana the most wicked character in the story of *Mahābhārata* is given a place in heaven. Not the slightest doubt is left in the mind of a reader, after going through this chapter, that some interested party has made a conscious attempt to be-smear the character of Śri Kṛṣṇa, the noblest man among the heroes and statesmen of his time, and strangely enough, most of the Hindus who have not carefully gone through the account of the war as a whole, believe in the truth of these charges and try to justify them in all sorts of ways.

When Śrī Kṛṣṇa returned to Dwārikā after the conclusion of the war, he gave a brief account of the major events of war to Vasudeva, his aged father. After describing that Bhīṣma was appointed the first commander-in-chief on the side of the Kurus, he said, "Śikhaṇḍi of great intelligence, protected by Arjuna became the leader of the seven divisions of the sons of Pāṇḍavas. The battle between the Kurus and Pāṇḍavas raged for ten days. It was so fearful as to make one's hair stand on end. Then Śikhaṇḍi, in great battle, aided by the wielder of Gandiva, slew with innumerable arrows, the son of Ganga fighting

bravely."* It is not said here, as is generally believed, that Bhīṣma refused to fight against Śikhaṇḍi and so was slain.

Droṇa succeeded Bhīṣma, while Dhṛṣṭadyumna, the enemy of Drona was appointed to lead the Pāṇḍava army against him. Both the heroes achieved great feats in battle. "That furious battle" says Kṛṣṇa to his father "lasted for five days. At the conclusion of that period, Droṇa, exhausted, succumbed to Pāṇḍava forces...... The Sūta's son (Karṇa) though a fierce warrior, encountering Pārtha come to his end on the second day like an insect encountering a blazing fire."†

It may be said, that Kṛṣṇa would not reveal, from his own lips, the questionable methods which he had suggested during the war. But, as we have said before, Kṛṣṇa is praised in many places in *Mahābhāruta* for his great qualities of truthfulness and integrity; and so we can give due importance, to his own account of the major events of the great war. The alleged use of deceitful and unfair tactics repreatedly, goes against his reputation for truthfulness. While giving an account of the events of the great war to his father, he deliberately omitted the episode pertaining to the death of

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*As'wamedha Parva sec. LX. English translation published by Partap Chandra Ray, C.I.B Calcutta.

†Ibid As'wamedha sec. LX.

Abhimanyu, in order to avoid giving a shock to his aged father. But Subhadrā asked him to describe that event also on which Vasudeo his father said to him, "Oh, Lotus-eyed one ! thou art famous on earth for being truthful in speech. Why, Oh slayer of foes, dost thou not tell me today of the death of my daughter's son, Possessed of eyes resembling thine." Alas ! how was he slain in battle by foes"* Here again Vasudeo refers to his son's wide-spread fame for truthfulness.

We know from *Mahābhārata* that Uttarā, the pregnant wife of the great hero Abhimanyu, after he had been slain in the battle, gave birth to a still-born child. It caused a great anguish to all people, as all hope for perpetuating the pāṇḍava dynasty had been centred upon this child. The lamenting ladies of the house-hold implored Śrī Kṛṣṇa to do something to bring the child to life. While trying to revive the still-born babe of Uttarā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa took the following oath, "If I have always been truthful in my life, and have never told a lie, let this son of Uttarā take breath again'' and the child, it is said, began to show signs of life. It is unbelievable that a person so highly known for truthfulness and integrity should have been guilty of dishonourable acts.

The Love Life of Kṛṣṇa;

The *Bhāgawata* and some other *Purāṇas* give a highly colourful account of the relations of

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**Ibid* Sec. LXI.

Kṛṣṇa with the cow-herd maidens of Vrindāvan. These distorted accounts leave a very bad impression, regarding the character of Kṛṣṇa, on the mind of an unwary reader. In our opinion, the only true part of these descriptions is, that Kṛsṅa, in his childhood and youth, was the cynosure of the men and women of the place. On account of his uncommon physical beauty and charming behaviour, he was the centre of attraction in the mixed dance parties (Rās Līlās) which appear to have been a recognised feature of the social life of the people among whome Kṛṣṇa spent his early life. Every thing else, including the personality of Rādhā, is a creation of the rich imagination of later writers, and should be completely ignored.

There is no historical basis for the current stories of love between Lord Kṛṣṇa and the cow-herd maidens of Vrindāvan. We do not find any mention of such things in the *Mahābhārata*. On the occasion of the Rājasūya Yajña of King Yudhiṣṭhira, Śiśupāla showers all sorts of abuses on Śrī Kṛṣṇa and refers contemptuously to his boyhood exploits, but does not cast any aspersion on the character of Kṛṣṇa. If there had existed any doubtful relations between Kṛṣṇa and the gopies, Śiśupāla, the arch enemy of Kṛṣṇa, would not have lost the opportunity to expose him to public ridicule on this score.

The *Mahābhārata*, in its present form, is said to have been composed between 400 B.C. and 100 A.D. It means that up to this period the stories of Kṛṣṇa's love had not yet come into vogue. These stories are the

creation of a later age, when the Bhakti cult with reference to Kṛṣṇa as the incarnation of God had been firmly established. It is in this period, sometime after the beginning of the Christian Era, that this development in the worship of Kṛṣṇa took place. The yearning of a soul for God was given a concrete symbolical expression in the form of love which a woman feels for her lover. "When the vague joy of an occult divine love" says a writer, "craves expression, it has to clothe itself in language of natural love for want of a vocabulary of its own." Gradually these stories, at the hands of various writers assumed fantastic proportions. We find this development in a number of *Purāṇas* including the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa.*

But all this has nothing to do with the actual life of Kṛṣṇa which we can piece together from different sources. These stories therefore have no factual basis what-so-ever.

His personal charm and beauty as well as his physical prowess were, perhaps, responsible for getting a large household for him. He is said to have married eight wives. Marrying more wives than one was the common practice, in those days, among kings and members of noble families. Kṛṣṇa therefore in this respect, if the facts are true, followed the usual custom of the age. The fact that he had married as many as eight wives may, in our opinion, be due to a large extent, to the desire on the part of these ladies or their parents, that they should become his wives, and as custom did not stand in the way, their love was

respected and their wish gratified. It is said that, though various difficulties had to be faced and solved in this large household, there was complete domestic harmony and all co-wives lived in an atmosphere of love and happiness, and none of them had any reason to complain of neglect or discriminatory treatment.

It is not intended to justify polygamy in any way. But we should, as far as possible, avoid judging the customary usages of the past in terms of present day standard. It would however be wrong to draw the conclusion that Kṛṣṇa was very susceptible to feminine charms, or that he was very much given to sensual indulgence. Over-indulgent persons, as is well known cannot develop great qualities of body, mind and spirit, and Kṛṣṇa was famous for his unusual physical strength and valour and extraordinary mental and spiritual powers. Apart from these marriages, there is no mention anywhere that he was given to sensual pleasures, like most of his kins folk and others scions of noble families. It is narrated in *Mahābhārata* that Kṛṣṇa and Rukmani led a life of unbroken chastity for twelve years, so that they could have a son who might be the equal of Kṛṣṇa in prowess, heroism and virtue. (Souptic Parva, 12, 30) A man of such iron will and heroic mould could not be a slave to passion. Out of the many names and epithets given to Kṛṣṇa, one is Achyuta which means pure or chaste. This gives an idea as to what his contemporaries and admirers thought of him and his character in respect of his relations with the fair-sex,

It is quite possible that the story of Śrī Kṛṣṇa having married eight wives may not be wholly true. The names of the eight wives of Kṛṣṇa occur mostly in the Purāṇas and that also with variations, along with the circumstances in which these marriages took place. Not content with these eight wives, the *Bhāgawata Purāṇa* narrates a ridiculous story that Śrī Kṛṣṇa after killing Narakāsura the great tyrant king of Prāg-jotiṣa (Assam) married all the sixteen thousand women confined in the inner apartments of Narakāsura. All this is false and un-natural and not worth a moment's notice. The story of the eight wives of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in all probability, is likewise a creation of the authors of the Purāṇas. Shri Bankim, in his life of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, expresses the view that Kṛṣṇa was married only to Rukmaṇī and that the story of his marriage to other wives cannot be regarded to be above all doubt. It is stated in the *Mahābhārata* that when Viṣṇu incarnated himself as Kṛṣṇa, Laxami or Śrī, the heavenly spouse of Viṣṇu, descended on the earth in the form of Rukmaṇī to be his earthly consort. This leads one to think that according to the author of the *Mahābhārata* only Rukmaṇī, the incarnation of Laxamī could be the spouse of Kṛṣṇa who was himself the incarnation of Viṣṇu. It is mentioned in the Purāṇas that all the wives of Kṛṣṇa had sons but we do not find the other sons taking any part in any battle or in any other major event, excepting the sons of Rukmaṇī. The sons of other wives as a rule do not appear anywhere, and even the wives other than Rukmaṇī do not seem to

play any part in the life of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. They mostly exist as names and even in respect of their names and their number, the Purāṇas give different versions. Moreover, the account of the circumstances under which most of these marriages are said to have taken place, appear to be fantastic and incredible. Jāmvatī, one of the wives of Kṛṣṇa, for instance, is said to have been the daughter of Jāmvanta who is described as the contemporary of Rāma in a previous age. How could he have been alive in the time of Kṛṣṇa who was born many centuries after the period of Rāma. There may, therefore, be a great deal of truth in the view of Bankim, that Rukmaṇī was the only wife of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the story of the other wives is a mere fabrication and a myth.

Kṛṣṇa was known as the wisest, the bravest and the noblest of the men of his times. On the occasion of the Rājasūya Yajña performed by Yudhiṣṭhira and to which all mighty rulers and distinguished men of the country had been invited, the question arose as to whom, amongst the assembled guests, the foremost place was to be given. Bhīṣma, the great patriarch to whom the important task of making a decision on this point was entrusted, without any hesitation, placed the mark of superiority on the forehead of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. All those who were present concurred with the judgment of the venerable Bhīṣma, excepting Śiśupāla and some of his supporters. When Śiśupāla protested against the decision, he was asked to match his strength against that of Kṛṣṇa, thereby testing for

himself the correctness of the judgment. He challenged Kṛṣṇa to a combat which the latter naturally had to accept. In the resulting contest Śiśupāla was defeated and met his death at the hands of his redoubtable adversary. In the whole of *Mahābhārata*, while we come across a cavalcade of valiant heroes, wise and holy men, great kings and potentates, Kṛṣṇa rises head and shoulders above all of them; his towering personality overshadowing all other men in respect of wisdom, valour, nobility and purity of life.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa was, by far, the greatest statesman of his time. He did not view with favour the division of India into a large number of independent kingdoms, constantly at war with one another. So he was anxious that there should come into being a federation of states under the over-lordship of a wise and powerful sovereign. When Yudhiṣṭhira, after he had been allotted the region of Indraprastha by Dhṛtarāṣṭra, mooted the idea of performing a Rājasuya Yajña, Kṛṣṇa gave it a warm welcome. He felt that Yudhiṣṭhira supported by his powerful brothers, answered to his conception of what a Chakravartin king should be. He therefore give his all-out help towards the successful execution of this great idea. All the kings of Āryavarta acknowledged the supremacy of Yudhiṣṭhira, the only other great adversary, Jarāsandha, the monarch of Magadha (Bihar) having already being vanquished and killed in a single combat by Bhīma, as the result of a wise plan thought out by Kṛṣṇa. If Yudhiṣṭhira had not yielded

to the weakness of playing dice and thereby losing all that he possessed, he would have continued for long to rule as a Chakravartin King over a united Āryavarta. But this was not to be and he lost all that he had gained through the bravery of his brothers and wisdom of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The country broke up once again into a number of separate independent warring kingdoms.

This state of things continued till after the *Mahābhārata* war when a sovereign state was established once again under the leadership of king Yudhiṣṭhira. This time the Chakravarti state of Āryavarta lasted long during the life-time of Yudhiṣṭhira and that of his descendants. During this period the country was free from internal wars and there was peace and prosperity all around. It was, at long last, a fulfilment of the dream of Śrī Kṛṣṇa for a united Āryavarta free from internal dissensions and conflicts.

It should be noted that Śrī Kṛṣṇa could have easily, by his own personal strength and heroism as well as with the help of the great Pāṇḍavas and that of his sons and Yādava kinsmen, made himself the sovereign king of the then known India. Instead of that he preferred to make Yudhiṣṭhira the overlord of united Āryavarta. Śrī Kṛṣṇa was thus not only a great warrior and a great statemen, he was also a man of high spiritual qualities, free from ambition and other human weaknesses. He was also a great religious teacher whose teachings, as embodied in the *Bhagawad Gītā*, have come down to us from ancient times. We shall

deal with his role as a great spiritual teacher in the rest of this book.

At numerous places in the *Mahābhārata*, there are frequent references to his supernormal psychic powers. While a good deal of this account may be due to "devotional and sentimental exaggeration", and there may be a good deal of a mixture of fantasy with facts, there is no doubt that as a consequence of his life-long practice of Yogic discipline, of which there is a mention in the *Mahābhārata*, he had attained great psychic powers. "He saw from Dwārkā a thousand miles away, Draupadī's agony of shame and heard her cry for help in Hastināpur, when Duśśāsana, at the bidding of his elder brother Duryodhana endavoured to pull away her clothes and denude her as a slave in assembly hall, and he answered the cry, and across all that distance, either hypnotised Duśśāsana and the whole assembly into seeing her cloth stretch exhaustlessly or actually multiplied and lengthened it endlessly (as the books say) by instantaneous materialisation. He also multiplied the remains of the food cooked by Draupadī inorder to enable her to feed and mollify the very choleric and curseful Ṛṣi Durvāsa and his many disciples. He appeared simultaneously in many places on other occasions. He healed the sick and straightened the deformed by the radiant vital magnetism, which made his caressing touch pour health into the ill and make them whole. He also, on rare occasions, brought back the dead to life, when apparently, the link between the subtle and dense body had not been wholly

broken, by that same magnetic power and will force. He laid down upon specially grievous sinners curses as of prolonged wandering in spiritual and physical misery upon Aśvatthāmā the killer of infants and sleepers".* There may be a lot of exaggeration in these occounts but in the presence of a large amount of evidence in favour of telepathy, clairvoyance, materialization, and other supernormal phenomena, obtained by the Psychical Research Society under strict scientific conditions in modern times, no doubt is left that much of this account as well as many other incidents of this nature ascribed to Śrī Kṛṣṇa might have had a foundation in actual fact.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa possesses a very complex personality. To the Hindu mind, he appears as a perfect man in whom emotion, will and thought are found completely integrated. He lived what is described in the *Gītā* as the ideal life of a Sthita Prajna or a Triguṇātīta. The ideal man of *Gītā* leads an active life of action till his death. But his actions are disinterested and he maintains an air of detachment in the midst of his manifold activities. Kṛṣṇa is a lover of mankind, (Sarva Bhūtahiterata), and his hand of fellowship extends to all, without distinction of high and low. His simplicity and warmth of affection is such that every person-man, woman or child-imagines himself or herself as a special object of his love and attachment. He is found constantly forgetting his exalted position

*(Abridged from Dr. Bhagwan Dass's 'Krishna' pp. 123-126).

and coming down to mix freely with the humble and unsophisticated men and women. His treatment of Sudāmā as well as his preference for the hospitality of the sage Vidura to that of king Duryodhana will ever remain symbolic of his warm affection and never-failing kindness for the poorer and humbler order of people.

Kṛṣṇa seldom showed signs of perturbation in the presence of even the greatest danger, nor did he ever lose his temper when highly provoked. When dangers came, he faced them and conquered them. Though he was so mighty and powerful and had hardly an equal in strength and prowess, he was singularly free from any ambition for personal glory and aggrandisement. His skill and mastery in the use of weapons were admittedly greater than those of Bhīṣma, Droṇa and Arujna. There are many periods in his life when he underwent prolonged Tapasyā and meditation, and thus acquired matchless control over himself. He fought against tyrants and evil-minded kings in order to uphold the cause of justice and righteousness, and not that he might add to his dominions or riches. As a matter of fact, he had no dominions, as he never became a king, though he could very easily become one.

Kṛṣṇa was equally a lover of beauty and the arts of life. His was a rich artistic life, and he was fond of music, dance and innocent fun and frolic. That made him human, and easily won for him the affection and admiration of common men and women. They could

not understand his profound wisdom, but they could very well respond to his simple and fun-loving temperament.

Such was the many-sided character of Kṛṣṇa. So great was he in different aspects of life that he came to be looked upon in course of time as a divine being, and later on, as an incarnation of God himself.

Chapter III

Social and Political Conditions in the Mahābhārata Period

The epic period of the Vedic age extends from the fourteenth century B. C. to about the fifth century B. C., when the traditional story of the great war began to be written down in the form of *Mahābhārata*. The *Mahābhārata* tries to delineate the social and political conditions as they existed in the times when Śrī Kṛṣṇa and other heroes of the great war actually lived. Though these accounts might have been, to some extent, coloured by the conditions of the period in which the Epic was composed, there is no reason to suppose that, in their main features, these accounts are not true. In all likelihood, there was no major change in these conditions from the time of the Mahābhārata war down to the close of the epic period at about the fifth century B. C.

We are told in the *Mahābhārata*, that when the great battle between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas was fought, and in which Kṛṣṇa took a very prominent part, Indian society was divided into four major castes, out of which the first three, the Brāhmaṇas, Kshtriyas and Vaiśyas freely inter-married and the caste and calling of the son were determined by those of the father. The fourth caste, Śūdras consisted mainly of the non-Aryans who had been subjugated by the

Aryan invaders from the North-west of India. These were generally of dark complexion, and so the white-complexioned Aryans did not, at first, enter into matrimonial alliance with them, just as in modern times the white people are averse to intermarrying into coloured families. And if by any chance, such marriages take place and children are born of them, they are not given the same position as children born of white parents. It is difficult to say how long this colour prejudice will last, but it is a fact that it has lasted during all the past centuries in various parts of the world.

According to C. V. Vaidya, as the second wave of the Aryan invaders penetrated further into the eastern regions of India i.e. into the valley of the Jamuna and beyond, they were forced, by circum-stances, to marry non-Aryan women as they had fewer Aryan women with them. He says, "Though in the Panjab, the state of the population remained as it was, in the valley of the Jamuna and the Ganges which fell under the dominion of the new Āryas, the inter-mixture of races in all grades of society became extensive, and the Brāhmaṇas, the Kshtriyas and the Vaiśyas, the three higher classes of the new population were tainted to a very large extent with an admixture of Draviḍian blood. It is thus that in the United Provinces and the provinces lower down, the higher castes exhibit so large a mixture of Draviḍian blood as is evidenced by their higher nasal index." (Epic India pp. 70—71).

This perhaps explains the great liberality of views, as indicated in the famous Nahuṣa-Yudhiṣṭhira discourse in the *Mahābhārata*. "Who is a Brāhmaṇa," asked Nahuṣa, to which Yudhiṣṭhira replied, "One who is endowed with truthfulness, liberality, forgiveness, good conduct, equality of feeling towards all, austere life and compassion." "But the four castes do exist," rejoined Nahuṣa, "what then if truthfulness, liberality, forgivenness, etc are found in a Śūdra". Yudhiṣṭhira answerd, "If this mark exists in a Śūdra and does not exist in a Brāhmaṇa, that Śūdra is not a Śūdra and that Brāhmaṇa is not a Brāhmaṇa. O great serpent, where this mark exists, the person is a Brāhmaṇa, where it does not, the person is a Śūdra." and he says further in the same connection, "the caste, O great serpent ... is at present indistinguishable in consequence of the great admixture of races. Men of all castes beget children on women belonging to all castes indiscriminataly. Men are common only in speech, sexual intercourse, birth and death ... ... therefore, those who have an insight into the essence of things believe that conduct is the chief thing. Castes are useless, if suitable conduct does not exist; for the intermixture of races has been very great indeed." (Quoted by C. V. Vaidya pp. 71–72). As it was difficult to know, on account of the great mixing together of the castes, as to which caste a person actually belonged it was thought that the best way to determine the caste of a person was to refer to his conduct and his calling.

It seems that this state of things did not last long, and the Indian society in that region also, divided itself into four castes; the Brāhmaṇas occupying the highest and the Śūdras, the lowest rung of the ladder. Interdiction on marriage between the Āryas and the Sūdras was imposed, as earlier in the North-western part of India. The Śūdras, in the epic period, were the down-trodden section of Indian society.

Position of Women. In the epic period women held quite a respectable position in society. Of course, polygamy existed, especially in higher circles, but there was no child marriage. All the great heroines in the *Mahābhārata* such as Kuntī, Draupadī, Subhadrā, Uttarā were married at a grown up age. The early intercourse between man and woman is denounced at many places in the *Mahābhārata* as the chief mark of the Kaliyuga. In the previous Yugas, no man knew a women before he attained manhood. It is quite possible that in, certain strata of society, early marriages here and there might have begun to take place, though they were not a regular practice and were strongly condemned, whenever they took place, as unwholesome social practices.

From the religious point of view women, in the epic-period, did not occupy the same position as women of the earlier Vedic age. Formerly a sacrifice was not held complete unless the lady of the house participated in it. We do not find that a similar participation of the wife in religious functions was essential in the epic period. The position of women

deteriorated towards the end of the epic period as shown in the *Bhagawad Gītā* where from a religious point of view, women are equated with Śūdras.

We do not find instances of widow re-marriage in the *Mahābhārata*; but references to Niyoga (Levirate) are plentiful. Similarly, there is not much evidence for the custom of Sati in the *Mahābhārata.* Mādrī, of course, burnt herself on the Pyre of her dead husband the Pāṇḍu king; but we do not find the widows of the fallen heroes of the Mahābhārata war immolating themselves with the dead bodies of their husbands. None of the wives of Duryodhana, for instance, so burnt herself. It however appears from the account of Greek historians, that the custom of sati had become prevalent in certain sections towards the end of the epic period.

Political Conditions. Politically India, in the epic period, was divided into small tribal principalities. This explains why Yudhiṣṭhira desired from Dhṛitarāṣṭra, the conferment of only five villages for himself and his brothers. Kingdoms as a rule were not very extensive and they were not absolute or despotic in character. Now and then a king arose who impelled by the Chakravarti ideal, fought against the neighbour kings for over-lordship. The defeated kings were not generally dethroned and their kingdoms annexed. They were allowed to rule over their kingdoms on the condition that they accepted the conqueror king as their over-lord. This, as a rule, did not last long. As soon as the conqueror became weak or was succeeded by a

weak king, the tributary kings reverted to the original independent position. This went on up to the reign of the Mauryan dynasty. Magasthenes, in his account of India, speaks of 118 tribes or kingdoms in the India which he knew and that was only a small part of the whole of India. It is said, that Chandra Gupta the Mauryan king was the first emperor of India in a real sense.

Chapter IV

Deifecation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa

As we have already stated Kṛṣṇa, in all probability, lived in the 14th century B. C. It was a period when the simple religion of the ancient Aryans was giving way to the highly complicated sacrificial religion of the subsequent Brahmanical period. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, it seems, was one of those thinkers of the time, who did not attach much importance to the cult of sacrifices, and gave a new idea of the goal of human life and the means to achieve it. That Śrī Kṛṣṇa did not hold the sacrificial religion of his time in high esteem is made clear in the second and fourth chapters of *Bhagawad Gītā*. At his hands, the term Yajña (Sacrifice) receives a new meaning and becomes symbolic of a life of self-control and disinterested performance of one's duties and obligations.

We find from the *Mahabhārata* that Śrī Kṛṣṇa, besides being a great warrior and statesman, was also a great teacher of religion. It is quite possible that he, at first, taught the fundamental doctrines of his religion to the members of his own Sātvata clan and to his friends and relatives. The practice of Yoga understood in a broad sense, perhaps formed a very important part of his conception of religion. We find a reference, in *Bhagawad Gītā*, to Yoga as an ancient doctrine which he taught to Arjuna i.e. to men of his own times (IV. 1-3).

Shri S. M. Tadpatrikar of Poona says in his '*Kṛṣṇa problem*', "With regard to Kṛṣṇa's personal normal activities of an ordinary day, we have reference in *Mahābhārata* at XII. 52. ff. and in *Bhāgawata Purāṇa* at X Ch. 70, where we find him practising Yoga early in the morning. There is reference in the *Bhagawad Gītā* at Adh. IV stating that Kṛṣṇa revived the Yogic tradition. Perhaps it might be that he initiated the Pāṇḍavas, Bhīṣma and others in the yoga and was looked upon by them as their guru so that while he was to the world in general, a great hero and a politician, his inner circle looked upon him, even in his life time, as the reviver of an old system, the God incarnate come down to the earth for the purpose." (B. O. R. Institute Annals, Poona—Vol. X, pp. 334-335).

It is, therefore, quite possible that he either laid the foundation of a religion in his life time, or some time after his death, a new religion which later came to be known as Bhāgawata religion, sprang up in which the worship of God was conducted according to the teaching of Śrī Kṛṣṇa handed down orally, mostly among the members of Yādava or Sātvata clan. In later times the religious systems of Buddha and Mahāvīr arose with emphasis laid upon the life of self denial, renunciation and moral purity rather than on the observance of rituals. Similarly, among the Sātvata and Vṛṣṇi tribes, a new religion of devotion to God, in the form of Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, had taken its rise in an earlier period. Just as in the beginning

Buddhism and Jainism were mostly confined to the Kṣatriya tribes of the Śakyas and Jivatrakas, to which their respective founders belonged; similarly the Bhāgawat religion, in its beginning, might have been chiefly confined to Vṛṣṇi clan, to which Kṛṣṇa himself belonged.

In course of time Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the great warrior, statesman and religious teacher, came to be looked upon as a divine being and later on to be worshipped as an incarnation of the Supreme being. The deifecation of Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva was brought about by means of the theory of Avatāra Vāda, which, it seems, was invented to explain how a human being could also at the same time be the Supreme being. D. P. Hill says, "A doctrine of Avatāra was a necessary corollary to the identification of Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva with the Supreme. Here was Kṛṣṇa in human form, Arjuna's Charioteer at Kurukshetra. If he was at the same time the highest God the paradox could only be explained by the theory of descent. God had taken earthly forms in earlier days also for the benefit of gods and men; Kṛṣṇa was then the last and the greatest of a series of descents." (Hill. *Bhagawad Gītā* p. 10). When the doctrine of Avatāra was conceived, Kṛṣṇa was identified with Brāhmaṇ as the supreme being. We do not find anywhere in the *Bhagawad Gītā*, that he was the incarnation of Viṣṇu. This identification was affected later.

The first literary evidence of the existence of Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva sect is found in Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyi.*

VII. 3. 98 (400 B.C.) where the word Vasudevika is explained in the sense of the worshipper of Vāsudeva. It thus appears that by the 4th century B.C. and even before, Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva had begun to be worshipped as a Divine being. Although a sect of Vāsudeva worshippers existed during the 4th century B. C. and presumably even much earlier, it had not yet attained a wide popularity. It remained confined in a small region as is indicated by the second line of evidence provided by Megasthenes who lived in an Indian court for a number of years in 3rd century B.C. He says in his account of India, that the worship of Kṛṣṇa was confined to Mathura and some neighbouring regions.

The worship of Kṛṣṇa, though not spread over a wide area, was in all likelihood, in existence for some centuries before the age of Pāṇini, though no definite date can be assigned as to when his worship actually began.

Identification with Viṣṇu. In his introduction to the *Bhagawad Gītā* Garbe advances the opinion that originally the Bhāgawata religion was independent of the Vedic traditions, leading a solitary life for many centuries outside the pale of Brahmanical religion. At about the 3rd century B.C., the growing popularity of the Bhāgawata religion among the masses, most probably, drew the attention of the religious leaders of Bramanism and they were led, on account of its irresistible appeal to the people, to incorporate the Bhāgawata cult into Hindu religion. They also realised its great value as a counter-acting force to the growing

influence of Buddhism. They identified Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva with Viṣṇu, the most popular god of the time. Śiva was the only other god who enjoyed a similar popularity among his followers. All other gods such as Indra, Varuṇa, Brahmā, Agni, Aditi etc. had been relegated, before the end of the epic period, to a subordinate position.

We find Megasthenes (300 B. C.) describing Kṛṣṇa as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. No such indentification of Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu is hinted at in the *Bhagawad Gītā* ; so it must have taken place after the composition of *Bhagawad Gītā* and before the time of Megasthenes. From now on, the Bhāgawata religion came to be known as Vaiṣṇavism as well, and became an important sect of Hinduism.

Though the Bhāgawata sect had come down from a very early time, it began to be popular only after about 300 B.C. when it was accepted as a part of Hinduism. We do not find any mention of Bhāgawata religion or of Vaiṣṇavism in the well-known inscription of Aśoka, which describes almost all the existing sects of the time. If Vaiṣṇavism had been well-known in the time of Aśoka, it would have certainly found a place in the inscription. It began to spread, along with Śaivism, when the rule of India passed on to Hindu kings after the fall of Maurya dynasty. By the beginning of Christian era it had established itself in North India and during the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. it found its place in south India as well.

Development of Bhāgawata religion. Garbe

divides the development of Bhāgawata religion into four periods. During the first period, extending from an uncertain past to about 300 B.C. it led a solitary life outside the pale of Brāhmaṇism. During this period Kṛṣṇa had already begun to be deified as an incarnation of Brāhmaṇ or the Supreme being.

In the second period from 300 B.C. to the beginning of Christian era, Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva was identified with Viṣṇu, and the Bhāgawata religion was thus assimilated into Hinduism. That the Bhāgawata religion in the beginning was anti-Vedic is admitted even by Śaṅkarāçārya who lived at a time when the Bhāgawata religion had completely merged into Hinduism, and all memories of its having been originally anti-vedic had been mostly forgotten. "How can it be doubted that the Brāhmaṇas had admitted the Bhāgawata into their own Brāmaṇical ranks, quite reluctantly indeed, but with a correct apprehension of the many advantages accruing there from, inorder to be able to counteract the influence of Buddhism all the more successfully." (Garbe p. 18). It must have been done some time before the time of Megasthenes (300 B.C.) who expressly refers to Kṛṣṇa as the Avatāra of Viṣṇu. In all later inscriptions referred to above, the Avatāra-hood of Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva in relation to Viṣṇu is clearly recognised. We also find during this period, Kṛṣṇa being identified with Nārāyaṇa. It must have been done some time after the appearance of *Bhagawad Gītā*, as the latter makes no mention of this fact.

'Nārāyaṇa', means the resting place of gods and men and as such it possesses a cosmic character. He is the Supreme in its universal immanance. While the identification of Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu satisfied the desire of the worshipper for a personal Supreme, cosmic Nārāyaṇa met the need of the philosopher who preferred to meditate on Vāsudeva as the immanent principle of life.*

We also find in this period, the emergence of the doctrine of Vyūhas or divine forms. The worship of Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, most probably after the age of *Gītā*, was associated with that of his brother Balrām or Saṅkarṣaṇa and later with Pradyumna and Anuruddha, his son and grandson respectively. In religious imagination, however, these three came to be looked upon as emanations from the Supreme being in the form of Jīva, Manas and Ahaṅkāra respectively. According to Sir Bhandarkar, up to the beginning of the first century B.C., only two Vyūhas or forms of the Supreme were known Vāsudeva and Saṅkarṣaṇa. In Nanaghat inscription which belongs to this period, only the worship of these Vyūhas is mentioned. The doctrine of four Vyūhas was developed only at a later time. It, however, seems that the worship of the four Vyūhas did not continue for long. We do not find any reference to it in later times.

The third period of the development of Kṛṣṇa cult or Vaiṣṇavism extends from about the beginning

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*Hill., Bhagwad Gītā, p. 90.

of Christian era to 12th century A.D. During this period Vaiṣṇavism spread far and wide over the whole of India, and an element of eroticism in the form of love-sport between Kṛṣṇa and the cow-herd maidens (Gopis) made its appearance. The association of Kṛṣṇa with Rādhā also took place during this period. The early life of Kṛṣṇa at Brindāvana and his various exploits during this period took a firm grasp of popular imagination. In fact the conception of Kṛṣṇa in the popular mind became confined to what he was during his early life. In the eyes of the common people and the devotees of Kṛṣṇa he was and is the god in human form, who tended the cows and participated in dance and song in the company of the maidens of Brindāvana. The idea of Kṛṣṇa as a great statesman, a great yogi and a great teacher of spiritual truth went completely into the background.

In the fourth period, from the 12th century onwards, we find that a number of writers such as Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, Mādhavāchārya etc. tried to give a philosophic foundation to the devotional religion of Vaiṣṇavism by means of their well-known commentaries upon the *Bhagawad Gītā* and the *Vedānta sūtras*. Already at about 8th century A.D. and the following centuries a large number of Vaiṣṇava poets, known as Alvārs, arose in the south, who composed beautiful songs and poems in the vernaculars of the people, and won over a large number of them to the Vaiṣṇava religion. Later in the 14th century, the momentum was transferred to North India and various saints such as

Rāmānand, Kabīr, Chaitanya and others arose, who by means of their heart-captivating songs preached the devotional religion of Vaiṣṇavism right upto the 18th century.

Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism. We may also refer here, for the sake of completeness, to Śaivism which has been prevalent among the Hindus from old times along with Vaiṣṇavism. It is widely spread throughout India and in popularity, it perhaps ranks next to Vaiṣṇavism. Like Vaiṣṇavism, it also began its career outside the pale of Brāhmanic religion and was later assimilated into orthodox Hinduism. It is not easy to give the date when this sect came into existence. It is in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* (200 B.C.) that we come across the first literary evidence of the existence of the Śaiva cult. Patañjali, in his great work, refers to the worship of Śiva by means of an image or idol of human shape. The worship of Śiva in the form of Liṅga, in all probability, came later and appears to have been borrowed from some tribes of the non-Aryans among whom it was prevalent. In the Ṛgved there is a contemptuous allusion to the existence of such Phallic worshippers.

By the time the composition of the *Mahābhārata* was completed i.e. by about the 2nd century B.C., the worship of Śiva had been firmly established. In the *Mahābhārata* it is alluded to at many places. It is the general belief of the followers of Śaivism that Śiva himself was the founder of their religion. "the *Vāyu Purāṇa* (Chapter XXIII) and *Liṅga Purāṇa*

(Ch. XXIV) represent Maheśvara to have told Brahmandeva, that when at the time of Kṛṣṇa dvaipāyana during the 28th repetition of the Yugas, Vāsudeva, the best of Yādavas, would be born of Vasudeva, he would incarnate himself as a Brahmachārin by the name of Lakulin, after entering into a dead body thrown into a cemetary. The place where this would occur would be called Kāyavatāra or Kāyāvarohaṇa, and he would have four pupils of the names of Kuṣika, Garga, Mitra and Karūṣya." (Bhandarkar, *Śaivism and Vaiṣṇuvism* p. 116). On some inscriptions found near Udaipur.in Rajasthan and in Mysore, a more or less similar account of the origin of Śaiva system is given. From all this Dr. Bhandarkar concludes that "there lived a certaiṇ person of the name of Lakulin (the holder of a Lukuta or Laguda, or Lakula i.e. a club) who founded the Paśupati system ... ... in 2nd century B. C. "(ibid pp. 116-117).

This Lakulin or Lakulisa who is traditionally regarded as the founder of Śaivism, is said to have lived somewhere in Gujrat, but Mathura seems to be the centre where Lakulisa taught his doctrines, and there is a long unbroken tradition of Śaiva teachers who flourished during the Gupta reign. As recently as 1945 an image of Lakulisa was discovered at Mathura. There are also some Śaiva sculptures at Mathura from which we can get some idea of Śaiva religion as it prevailed there.

We learn from Hieuen Tsang the Chinese

traveller who visited India in 7th century A. D., that there were many temples in India dedicated to worship of Maheśavara. According to his account, there were thousands of Śaiva ascetics who besmeared their bodies with ashes and lived in temples or outside in open spaces. Besides these ascetics, there were lay followers of Śiva, and their number was very large. By that time the worship of Śiva had become popular among the Indian people.

Like Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism also, after the revival of Hinduism in North India, penetrated into South India during 4th and 5th centuries A. D. In the south, it met with great opposition at the hands of Jainism which had already established itself there. Śaivism gave rise, in the succeeding centuries, to a large number of saints known as Adyārs who composed beautiful devotional songs in praise of Śiva. These songs evoked great emotional fervour among the people, and won them over to Śaivism. These Śaiva saints of the south were the counter-parts of the Alvārs of Vaiṣṇavism. The Hymns composed by the Adyārs consist of eleven collections which form the great literature of Śaivism in the south.

Viṣṇu and Śiva are thus the most popular of the gods worshipped by the Hindus, but it must not be supposed that the worship of Viṣṇu and that of Śiva are mutually exclusive. As a matter of fact, almost all Hindu devotees worship at both the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva temples. Both Viṣṇu and Śiva are regarded as forms of the same Supreme being, and so in the

eyes of the pious Hindus, both these names are held in equal veneration. In the *Mahābhārata*, there are narrated numerous stories to indicate close relationship between Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva and the god Śiva. They are both praised to an equal degree and at many places Kṛṣṇa is represented as praising Śiva and vice versa.

It is certain that in the early centuries of popular Hinduism there was no antagonism between the followers of Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and other religious sects. The spirit of rivalry among the sects appeared later, but it did not last long. It was practically unknown in early Hinduism. There was complete concord in the Gupta period. The members of the royal family are described as worshipping in both Śiva and Viṣṇu temples. The Gupta kings, though they were mostly the devotees of Viṣṇu and styled themselves as Parama-Bhāgawatas, equally patronised Śaiva religion as well as Brāhmaṇic ritualism. They freely employed ministers from among the followers of Śaivism. Kālidās, the poet Laureate of Chandra Gupta II was a Śaiva.

A modern orthodox Hindu also adopts a similar attitude towards Viṣṇu, Śiva and other gods and goddesses. A Hindu Monk Śantinātha speaks of his childhood experience as follows. "I remember, that when I was a mere boy, my mother used to visit the neighbouring temples and on many occasions I would accompany her. In the Dakshiṇeśvara temple she would order me 'bow down before this, this is mother Durgā, she is God; in the Śiva temple she

would bid me make obeisance reverentially to old Śiva, the living god ; in the Viṣṇu temple, she would command me to do homage to the deity Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of the world." (Experiences of a Truth seeker Vol. 1, p. 19).

Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism differ from each other chiefly in respect of the emphasis which they lay on the paths of Nivṛtti and Pravṛtti respectively. These two spiritual paths have been in existence from ancient times. The Nivṛtti Mārga lays stress on renunciation of all worldly attachments and activities. Pravṛtti Mārga, on the other hand, enjoins upon its followers to perform all worldly duties while leading a life of devotion and righteousness. The ascetic adherants of Śaivism are the followers of Nivṛtti mārga or the path of renunciation. Śiva is represented as the destroyer of Kāma or desire in its various forms. Most of the wandering sādhus, therefore, prefer to worship Śiva as a form of the Supreme and they are averse to engaging themselves in any activity what-so-ever, even in a benevolent activity. The worship of Viṣṇu is generally associated with Pravṛtti mārga. Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, the most famous incarnations of Viṣṇu, were born in Royal families and they both lived in the world performing their duties, in a spirit of detachment, throughout their lives. It does not imply that Vaiṣnavism as such is antagonistic to Sanyāsa, but it does not, as a rule, favour renunciation of activity and stands for disinterested performance of duties pertaining to one's āshrama or stage of life.

Chapter V

Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the Gītā

The *Bhagawad Gītā* purports to give the religious teachings of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. There is another *Gītā* in the *Mahābhārata* known as *Anu Gītā* which also professes to give the teaching of Śrī Kṛṣṇa on religious subjects. Unlike *Bhagawad Gītā*, the *Anu Gītā* is a systematic treatise, each chapter dealing with a specific topic. There is kinship between the *Bhagawad Gītā* and the *Anu Gītā* in respect of a number of subjects dealt with in both the treatises. In *Anu Gītā* we have separate chapters dealing with Yoga, Jñāna and Dharma ; Karma and Sanyāsa ; the various concepts of the Sānkhya such as Mahatattva, Ahaṅkāra, Pañch-Mahābhūta, the three Guṇas of Tamas, Rajas and Sattva and various moral qualities such as are described in chapter XVI of the *Bhagawad Gītā*. We have also in *Anu Gītā* the description of the various Adhipatis or divine manifestations, the various kinds of Yajña, the Kshetra and the Kshetrajña and comparison of the body with a tree and its branches. It thus appears from the great similarity in topics in both the books, that there was a body of teachings associated with the name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and orally transmitted from generation to generation, till it was written down in the form of these two books, when the great epic of *Mahābhārata* came to

be composed. The *Anu Gītā* does not make a very interesting reading. The *Bhagawad Gītā*, on the other hand, on account of its poetic beauty and inspiring character, has become a most favourite book of the Hindus, though it is not a systematic treatise like *Anu Gītā*. Sometimes different matters are treated in the same chapter and the same subject is dealt with in different chapters. There is also repetition in a number of places. But it does not take away from the charm of the book nor does it present any difficulty in understanding the view of the author on any particular subject. We have no doubt that it gives us the religious teachings of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in a clear and unmistakable manner. We shall therefore, in giving a systematic account of the religious teachings of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, depend upon the authority of *Bhagawad Gītā*, the great religious scripture of Hinduism.

Gītā : The Common Scripture of Hinduism. *Gītā* is the most popular and universally accepted religious book of almost all sects of Hinduism. Whatever be the mode of worship of the different Hindu sects, their basic philosophical and religious ideas are more or less the same and they have nowhere been so beautifully and succinctly expressed as in the *Bhagawad Gītā*. The various religious sects have their own separate religious books, but they all share Gītā as a common scripture and derive unceasing delight and inspiration from its study. The book is equally popular among those Hindus who do not believe in the doctrine of divine incarnation or in

Purāṇic mythology. The occasions where Kṛṣṇa speaks of himself as God, are interpreted by them as dramatic forms of expression which create a vivid impression on the minds of the readers. Though produced by a follower of Bhāgawata religion, the *Gītā* contains the essential elements of religion so beautifully expressed that few persons can remain uneffected by them.

In course of time, a large number of commentaries were written on the *Bhagawad Gītā* by scholars of different religious denominations, each trying to prove the kinship of *Gītā* to his own particular point of view. There are commentaries on the *Gītā* by Vaiṣṇava writers such as Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, Mādhava and others. Among Śaiva writers, the most influential commentary is that of Śaṅkrāchārya.

Bhagawad Gītā, a Great Synthesis. The *Gītā* purports to narrate what Kṛṣṇa taught to Arjuna on the battle field of Kurukṣhetra before the commencement of hostilities. Naturally what is given in the *Gītā* cannot be said to be the actual words of Kṛṣṇa himself. We may take it to be a historical fact that Arjuna gave way to despondency before the battle commenced, and Kṛṣṇa spoke to him words of wisdom in order to bring him back to a normal state of mind. But it is equally open to us to regard the battle scene as only a dramatic setting for expounding the religious teachings of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, It is quite possible that these religious teachings were kept alive through vocal transmission and then put down in writing later

on and included in the original *Mahābhārata*. It is well known that the present *Mahābhārata* in its enlarged form, took shape some time from the 4th to 2nd century B. C. We also know it on the authority of the *Mahābhārata* itself that the extant text is an expanded version of the original text which was much smaller in size, containing only 24000 Ślokas, while the expanded *Mahābhārata* contains as many as a lac of Ślokas and even more. There is no wonder, therefore, if we find in it some additions which are post-Buddhistic ; but these are not many. There are only a few references to Buddhism and a large part of the epic has very little which can be called post-Buddhistic. In the *Bhagawad Gītā* there is no reference to Buddhism at all. In Chapter XVI, we find a strong condemnation of scepticism and materialism ; but it seems more to point to systems akin to the çārvāka and lokāyata schools than to the Buddhist Schools. The latter definitely do not teach people to hanker after worldly enjoyments, throwing to the wind all considerations of justice and righteousness, and it is against this type of materialistic sensualism that the author of the *Bhagawad Gītā* wages a relentless war. There is, therefore, every reason to believe that the original smaller story of the *Mahābhārata* was written in pre-Buddhist period, and so the *Bhagawad Gītā* also, forming as it does an essential part of the *Mahābhārata* story, was composed at the same time or even prior to it. That explains the complete lack of any reference to the

Buddhist doctrine in the *Bhagawad Gītā*, though there are references, at various places, to the views and practices current in the age when the author of the poem lived. Dr. S. N. Das Gupta is of the opinion that the *Bhagawad Gītā* is the earliest work of the Bhāgawata religion and was written long before the composition of the *Mahābhārata*. It was incorporated into the great epic later at one of its revisions. It was probably written at about 500 B. C. in the last period of the Upaniṣadic age and before the *Sūtras* of the various schools of philosophy were composed. In its present form it has remained practically unchanged since that time.

But the scholar who gave form to the *Bhagawad Gītā*, must have been a great scholastic genius. He brought into being a work which, though woven round the original doctrines of Kṛṣṇa, as handed down by tradition, brought about a reconciliation among the various religious creeds prevalent at the time. "The poet is determined to appease the orthodox—the *vedas* and its Devas, the *Upaniṣada* with the Vedantic theory of Brahman-Atma, the conceptions of Puruṣa and Iśvara, Sāmkhya knowledge and Yoga practice none of these are neglected—liberation is won by work, by knowledge, by devotion by all these three in due proportion, and over all these broods the grace of God, that stirs and meets the love of man. The performance of caste duties is taught, religious privilege is extended beyond the male twice-born to Śūdras and to women" (Hill *Bhagawad Gītā* p. 16).

Some writers such as Hopkins, Garbe, Otto and others have not been able to reconcile themselves to the presence of so many elements in the *Gītā*. They regard them as contradictory to one another, and so they hold the view that a number of things were interpolated later, and therefore the whole book cannot be regarded as having emanated from the same author. These writers are not able to see that the real purpose of the author is to present the good points of various prevalent views and doctrines and in this he has succeeded marvellously. In the book itself, Arjuna is represented as confessing to a feeling of confusion on account of what appeared to him as contradictory statements. (*Gītā*, III. 1). It clearly shows that the author himself was aware of these seeming contradictions. "And if Arjuna" says Hill, "is ultimately satisfied by Kṛṣṇa's explanation, is it not probable that the writer was rather attempting a reconciliation of beliefs than carelessly throwing together an inconsistent medley" (*Bhagawad Gītā* p. 16). Our own view is that the author has not kept us in the dark about his own views on different problems, even though he has, at the same time, referred to other doctrines as for instance in the reference to sacrificial cult in Ch. II. 43—46. It is described as leading to the fulfilment of all desires in this world or the next, but Arjuna is advised in the very next verses that he should rise superior to all desire for the fruits of actions, and perform the prescribed duties without any attachment to their

fruits. The latter refers to the view of the author himself. The author has used this method of presentation at other places also. For further elucidation of this point the reader should refer to chapter I in part II.

The *Gītā* accepts the categories of Puruṣa and Prakṛti of the *Sāṅkhya*, and describes the whole process of world-formation with the help of these categories ; but at the same time it subordinates them to the supreme category of Brahman with Prakṛti and Jīva as its two aspects, lower and higher. (VII. 4-7) Thus while it accepts the well-known *Sāṅkhya* account of the evolution of the world, it, at the same time, tries to reconcile it with the spiritual monism of the *Upaniṣads*. The truth probably is that the *Sāṅkhya*, which was prevalent at the time of the *Bhagawad* Gītā was theistic *Sāṅkhya* and so we can refer almost all the metaphysical doctrines of *Gītā* to the *Sāṅkhya* system. We shall have more to say on this point later on.

The *Gītā*, composed as it was in the last phase of the period of *Upaniṣads*, shows a great connection with the teaching of the *Upaniṣads*, so much so that each chapter of the book is traditionally called an *Upaniṣad* on its own account. Śrī G. V. Devasthali has made an interesting study of the close connection of the *Gītā* with the *Upaniṣads* in his article published in Sarūpa Bhārati, by the V.V.R. Institute, Hoshiarpur. Apart from as many as six almost identical passages in the *Upaniṣads* and the *Gītā* (B. G. II. 19-20 and

K. U. II. 17-18. B. G. VIII. 2, K. II. 15. B. G. XIII. 13-14 and Śvet. Up III. 16-17. B. G. V. 13 and Śvet. Up. III. 18), there are many parallel ideas to which Śrī Devasthali draws attention in his illuminating article, for instance the ideas in the *Gītā* of *Aśvattha* tree, of the two paths by which the souls depart after death, of the creation and absorption of beings, of the importance of last thoughts at the time of death as well as the ideas of Yajña, Tapas and Dāna are also found in *Upaniṣads* like *Kaṭh, Śvet, Chhandogya, Bṛhadāranyaka, Prśana Muṇḍaka* etc. The parallelism is so close that no doubt is left that the author of the *Bhagawad Gītā* is indebted to the *Upaniṣads* for many of his important ideas. Every idea, obtained from whatever source, has been beautifully woven into the system in order to produce a harmony out of the distinct notes. The various paths of self-realization, such as Jñāna, Karma and Bhakti, have also been fitted into the system in such a manner that they all appear as forming an organic whole, each supplementing the others. The result is that the versatile author of the *Gītā* has succeeded in producing a scripture, which has captivated the heart of entire Hinduism. There is no doubt that the later development of Buddhism into Mahāyāna owes a great deal to the influence of *Bhagawad Gītā* and the Bhāgawata religion.

PART II

Philosophical Ideas in Bhagawad Gītā

Chapter I

The Idea of God

Unlike Buddhism, the *Bhagawad Gītā* looks upon God as the supreme spiritual principle of all living and non-living beings. Out of the various views regarding the ultimate nature of reality such as agnosticism, naturalism and spiritualism, the *Gītā* accepts the view of spiritualism. In modern times, Herbert Spencer in England and Comte in France made popular the point of view known as agnosticism. According to both these writers, there does exist an ultimate reality, as otherwise we can not account for the world of phenomena or appearances. But we have no means of knowing its real character. Our knowledge is confined only to appearances, and there is no way by which we can take a peep into what lies beyond these appearances. We can never escape the relativity of experience. Herbert Spencer, therefore, speaks of the ultimate reality as 'the unknowable'. He separates reality from its mani-

festations. As a matter of fact, this world-appearance is the way in which Reality manifests itself and through which it can be known. We can never know anything apart from its quality or behaviour. We know electric energy only by the various phenomena to which it gives rise. There is no way to know it directly apart from its manifestations. How can we know a substance "Otherwise than through its qualities, a cause otherwise than through its effects, reality otherwise than through its appearance or manifestation. The phenomenon is the noumenon so far as it has manifested itself"[1]

One cannot, as a rule, abide in the agnostic position for long. We have a number of writers in modern times, who prefer to regard matter as the ultimate reality. Lifeless, inert and unconscious matter is supposed to be the source from which inorganic, organic and conscious beings take their rise. Their line of argument is, that before life or consciousness made its appearance in the world, there was nothing but a mass of material particles which came together in all sorts of accidental combinations. This state of things lasted for millions and millions of years before living and conscious organisms arose. The primitive state of things is taken by the protagonists of naturalism as indicative of the true nature of reality, every later development being some how contained in the earlier condition of existence.

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1. P. Pattison; *the Idea of God*, p. 214.

While criticising the naturalistic point of view, Pringle-Pattison rightly points out that in order to understand the real character of a thing, we have to take it in all of its various stages of evolution. Shall we be able to understand a man completely by a mere analysis of the parts of his body ? Shall we not take into account his vital, mental, intellectual, aesthetic, ethical and religious activities as well ? Presuming that we can know reality only by its manifestations, we shall, in order to know it as completely as we can, have to take into account not only its material manifestations but also the phenomena of life and consciousness, and the further evolution of consciousness from its primitive phase to its highest development in the ethical and religious life of mankind. The presence of a scale of qualitative differences in the world makes it difficult to accept naturalism on its own terms. There are ideals or values along with the facts of nature. Any conception of ultimate reality must take a note of both these aspects. We cannot regard the world as complete if we leave out man and his knowledge. Man with his knowledge and his ideals is organic to the world which cannot be properly understood apart from him and his values. Thus the nature of ultimate reality is revealed to a greater degree in the qualities of man than in the disposition of material forces in the universe.

In Indian thought, greater emphasis is placed upon man than on nature. An effort is made to under-

stand nature through man rather than the other way about. It is assumed that whatever is present in man is present in the universe as a whole ; "*Yat-Piṇḍe Tat Brahmāṇḍe*". The understanding of the nature of ultimate reality is attempted through the understanding of man. The Indian thinkers developed the view that man is a microcosm in which the whole macrocosm is represented. They discovered, by the processes of introspection and Yogic experience (Samādhi) that apart from body and mind, there is also the spirit in man, which sustains and supports all his conscious and unconscious activities, and that this spirit is akin to the universal spirit which pervades and supports the entire universe. They arrived at the conclusion that the ultimate reality cannot be less, though it can be infinitely more than its highest product man. Man is as much rooted in the ultimate reality as other things and beings of the universe are, and so reality must contain all that is in man, and infinitely more than that. Thus the highest ideals of man as shown in his love of beauty, truth, goodness and holiness afford a clue to the nature of the Supreme from which everything in nature, including man, has emanated.

The presence of law and orderliness in the world leads in the same direction. The world is rational through and through, and it is on account of its rationality that it can become the object of scientific study. Besides the rational inter-connectedness of the various parts of the world with one another, we

also find a gradual emergence of higher and higher categories of existence. All sorts of changes take place in the material elements, but these changes have a direction and a goal. There appears to be an urge in the heart of the universe towards the expression of higher and higher forms of being. Thus according to the third view, the ultimate reality is spiritual, something akin to consciousness rather than to matter. If you regard lifeless, dead and material forces as the originator of the world, you can, on this hypothesis, at most, account for the physical part of the universe. Life and consciousness simply refuse to be accommodated within the frame-work of materialistic scheme. Some great enthusiasts, of course, have tried to squeeze these higher categories into the Procrustian bed of materialism, but the attempt has satisfied very few people besides themselves. Consciousness, once it makes its appearance, goes on manifesting itself into higher and higher forms, till we come to its artistic, scientific, philosophic and mystic expressions. The ultimate reality must be such as to include in itself the possibility for all ranges of expression. It can, therefore, be better described as spirit than matter. Of course "Idealism cannot be demonstrated. It rests at bottom on an absolute conviction, the rationality of which is supported less by positive argumentation, than by the irrationality of the naturalistic hypothesis oppossed to it." Though spiritualism cannot be demonstrated in the sense of a clear logical deduction from given facts, it is not, for that reason, grounded on mere wishful thinking. It derives its strength

from the unmistakable evidence of law and order, adaptation of parts with one another and the whole, the gradual emergence of higher and higher categories of existence, culminating in the enlarged consciousness of mystic intuition. In spite of various obstacles in the way, evolution has gone on marching forward, though it could have, as shown by Bergson, stopped in the way, with the perfect adaptation of various lower species to their environment. There seems to be no reason to doubt that there is a certain urge in nature directing the evolutionery forces, as it were, along certain well-marked lines of development.

Gītā accepts this third view of the nature of ultimate reality. It is God, Uttama-puruṣa or Brahman of the *Upaniṣad*. Unlike the Buddha, who contented himself with a accepting the law of righteousness or Dharma as governing the destinies of mankind, the author of the *Gītā* definitely commits himself to the theistic point of view. He offers no proof for the existence of God but takes it for granted and derives all existences, organic and inorganic, from this ultimate principle. He follows, in this as in many other ways the *Sāṅkhya* doctrine as it was current in his time. References to *Sāṅkhya* are many while there is only one reference to *Brahma-Sūtra* in the XIIIth Chapter. S. N. Dass in his *History of Indian Philosophy* points out that there is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* the doctrine of theistic *Sāṅkhya* which appears to be an earlier form of the *Sāṅkhya* system as it developed in later times. In *Mahābhārata* Puruṣa and Prakṛti are

described as two aspects of one Brahman. It adds Iśvara as the twenty-sixth principle to the twenty-five principles of later *Sāṅkhya*. Deussen and Dahlman both hold the opinion that *Mahābhārata Sāṅkhya* is an earlier form from which the systematic *Sāṅkhya* was developed later. We see no reason to believe that the author of *Gītā* has got his philosophic ideas from two different sources *Sāṅkhya* and *Vedānta.* The probability is that *Gītā* is based almost entirely on the *Sāṅkhya* system as it was in its earlier phase, with belief in God as its necessary part. Of course, it has assimilated the essential teaching of the *Upaniṣads* and there are many resemblances, on important points, between the *Gītā* and some of the *Upaniṣads*, but its fundamental ideas of Prakṛti and Jīva and their subsumption under the conception of Uttama Puruṣa point to the original *Sāṅkhya* rather than to the *Upaniṣads* as providing its philosophic background. We should not forget that while the author of *Gītā* refers to *Sāṅkhya* over and over again throughout the discourse, his reference to *Vedānta* appears at one or two places only, in the whole of the book.

There is no doubt that in many passages in the *Gītā*, the word Brahman is used, as in the *Upaniṣads*, (X. 12, VII, 9) to mean the Supreme as impersonal and attributeless. In chapter XII 1-5 the contemplation of the impersonal Brahman is described as leading to salvation, though it is stated, at the same time, that it is very hard for an average man to

concentrate his mind on the abstract, impersonal Brahman of the *Upaniṣads.* It is far easier to attain salvation by the worship of personal God. This also points to the influence of the theistic *Sāṅkhya* on the author of the *Gītā*. *Gītā* no doubt recognises both methods of worship as leading to salvation, but it certainly prefers the worship of personal God to the contemplation of the qualitiless Absolute of the *Upaniṣads*. It should not be difficult to find out the view of the author of the *Gītā* on various subjects after one has grasped the method of exposition usually followed in it. The *Gītā* does not, as far as possible, repudiate the various prevalent views on different subjects, but at the same time it makes it perfectly clear as to what its own view on a particular subject is. The *Gītā* puts in a good word for the way of renunciation or Sannyāsa, but immediately afterwards it definitely indicates its preference for disinterested performance of action. Similarly it accepts the doctrine of Nirguṇa Brahman as propounded in some *Upaniṣads* but expresses itself unequivocally in favour of personal God who, at times, is put even higher than impersonal Brahman (XII 1-5, XIV, 27). The worship of spirits and demon is tolerated, but higher status is given to the worship of one omniscient God. The tendency, present throughout the *Gītā*, to see the good points of various views, has led many scholars to the conclusion that the standpoint of *Gītā* is all-inclusive even to the point of accepting mutually contradictory views. It seems to

us to be a wrong appraisal of the stand point of *Gītā*. The fact that the author of the *Gītā* does not condemn, out-right, the views of other people should not be interpreted to mean that he has no views of his own. We can find out his views on diverse subjects by taking into account those ideas for which he expresses his marked preference, and it is not very difficult to discover such ideas.

Acting on this principle, we have no difficulty in knowing that the author of the *Gītā*, while paying his homage to the Brahman of the *Upaniṣads*, is himself a believer in the doctrine of personal God. In the *Upaniṣads* also we meet with the view of God as personal and as the Lord of the Universe, though the view of the Supreme as impersonal and unthinkable is the one which is mainly associated with them. "The emphasis of the *Gītā*" Says Prof. Radhakrishnan, "is on the supreme as the personal god, who creates the perceptible worlds by his nature (Prakṛti). He resides in the heart of every being. He is enjoyer and Lord of all sacrifices. He stirs our heart to devotion and grants our prayers. He is the source and substance of value. He enters into personal relations with us in worship and prayer."

The inconceivable and qualitiless Brahman of the *Upaniṣads* is more or less, like "the unknowable" of Herbert Spencer which evokes a feeling of wonder and reverence but which cannot be known ; and so it remains a perpetual mystery. The Brahman of *Upaniṣads*, of course, is not unknowable in the sense of Spencer's

doctrine. Though it cannot be known with the help of intellect, it can be known through proper spiritual discipline as taught in the *Upaniṣads* themselves. The God of *Gītā* makes itself known by its manifestations. When Arjuna asked Kṛṣṇa how he is to know God, he is told that God is seated in the hearts of all, that in order to know him one should, in the beginning, concentrate one's mind on the most impressive and magnificient phenomena of the world. "Whatever thing there is of power, or glorious or splendid, know all that to be produced from a fraction of my energy". Ultimately the presence of God is to be discerned in all things good as well as bad. The great values of life bring before us the supreme reality at its best but we cannot take it away from the grim and terrible aspects of nature which some-how provide the base for the higher and nobler forms. In Chapter X, of course, God is identified only with the best of every conceivable class of being. "Of lights I am the Sun, Of Stars the Moon, Of *Vedas* the *Sāmveda,* Of Gods Indra, of senses the Mind, Of mountain the Himālayas" and so on. But this is only to help mankind to perceive God easily in His most prominent manifestations. But in other places God is described as the beginning, the end and the middle of all created things. He is inexhaustable and he faces all directions. He is the death of all as well as the source of what is to be. There is nothing moving or unmoving which can exist without him.

In chapter XI, is described in glowing terms,

the divine origin of all things, the mystic perception of the oneness of all things which, in our state of ignorance, appear as separate and independent of one another. The frightful and horrible phenomena of nature have as much a place in the whole as the pleasant, the beautiful and the sublime aspects. This mystic vision is vouchsafed to only a few lucky persons, and when it dawns upon any one, it dispels all doubts and uncertainties and makes him partake of the rare experience of cosmic consciousness. In this ecstatic frame of mind Arjuna exclaims "I see you without beginning, middle and end : possessed of infinite powers, unnumbered arms, having the sun and moon for eyes, a mouth like a blazing fire, and filling the universe with your radiant light. I see the space between heaven and earth and all quarters as pervaded by thee alone". And again, he sees the great warriors rushing headlong into the gaping mouth of that terrible apparition. "As the many rapid currents of the waters of a river run towards the sea alone, so do these heroes of the human world enter your mouths blazing all around. As butterflies, with increased velocity, enter a blazing fire and get destroyed so too do these people enter your mouths to their destruction. Swallowing all these people, you are licking them over and over again from all sides with your blazing mouth". And further on, he says "By you is this universe pervaded, Oh you of infinite forms you are the Wind, Yama, Fire, Varuṇa, the Moon and Prajāpati ...... you are of infinite powers

of unlimited glory : you pervade all, and therefore you are all".

No doubt is left in our mind, after reading these verses, that the *Gītā* places God right in the heart of things. He is known to us through his manifestations in the world of which we ourselves are a part. The various manifestations are actually a witness to His infinite power and wisdom (VII 8. 12). But it would be wrong to equate God with His manifestations. *Gītā* does not countenance the pantheistic theory of the world. God is immanent in the world, but He transcends it also. His infinite power is not exhausted in the creation of the world which is an outcome of only a small fraction of divine power. "With part of myself I support the entire universe" (X. 42). "All beings dwell in me. I do not dwell in them". "I am the supporter of all beings and do not rest in them". He is the cause of the existence of beings (IX. 5). With regard to the transcendental nature of God Egerton says, "this idea that the first Principle is more than all existing things, that the universe is only a part thereof is at least as old as the Puruṣa hymn of *Ṛgveda*, in which the entire universe is derived from only one quarter of the cosmic Puruṣa or Person."*

The *Gītā* thus assumes that there is a changeless Absolute reality behind the fleeting and ephemeral phenomena of the world. Nothing is stable in the world. The question naturally arises whether this

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*The *Bhagawad Gītā* p. 48.

everchanging transient phantasmagoria is all that is or there is a reality of which all these are the manifestations. The point of view of *Gītā* is that the changing phenomena point to a reality which is eternal and the source of all of them. The sun shines, the wind blows and the fire burns because of the Divine power which provides the impulse. Similarly in a living individual the eye, the ear, the tongue and mind perform their functions because there is the power of Ātmā or spirit behind them all.

According to some modern philosophies of evolution, things in nature are to be conceived under the process of evolutionary development. Nothing is outside the process of development, and there is no element of permanence in a world where everything is perpetually changing into some thing else. The end of the development is contained in the process itself. The evolutionary process, in course of its movement onwards, throws into manifestation existents of higher and higher levels. Every emergent existent is new and cannot be said to have been latent in the existents of the previous stage. It some-how springs into existence out of previous level.

From space-time, the original matrix of things, evolve, in succession, matter with its primary and secondary qualities, life and consciousness. There is no conceivable limit to the emergence of still higher forms. According to Alexander, deity is to be the future emergent in this evolutionary process.

There is no Perfect Being existing from all eternity, as men of religion believe. Perfection emerges at the last stage of evolution ; and when ultimately the world will come to rest, as the result of uniform distribution of energy, the diety will also share the fate of universal destruction.

The general assumption of the evolutionary theory is that there is a progress towards higher and higher levels ; but, as C. E. M. Joad says, "Progress involves a goal which is other than and outside the movement which seeks to achieve it." The goal is presented in the form of values and standards which the evolutionary process tends to realise more and more in the phenomena of the world. Without them, there can be no measure of the various levels of evolution as higher and lower. The concepts of higher and lower, better and worse etc. lose all significance if there is no standard external to the evolutionary process itself, by which the comparative value of different phenomena can be judged. In religious literature, these higher values or standards are represented as powers or manifestations of the Supreme. It is the pull of the divine, so to speak, which enables life, struggling through matter, to achieve higher and higher levels of awareness. Without God, there might be random movements in matter, but there would be no possibility of ordered development, as is assumed in all evolutionary theories.

As we look at conscious beings, we find, among

them, awareness of greater or lesser intensity. The consciousness of a dog is higher than that of an ant, that of a man is higher than that of a dog and among men also we meet with various levels of awareness. The consciousness of a scientist or of a saint is of a much higher quality than that of an average person. A higher consciousness is one which is directed to higher objects or objects of greater and higher value. These values are absolute and independent of our minds and, according to Joad, they may be regarded as modes under which the Absolute being permits himself to be known.

God and the World. Assuming that there is an ultimate reality, we have to form some idea of the relation between this ultimate reality and its various manifestations. How did this whole world, with its multitudinous contents, come into being? Why should the changeless, ever-perfect reality give rise to ephemeral and ever-changing phenomena? What can a finite human being, whose thinking cannot transcend the bounds of relativity, say of matters which fall outside the scope of his limited vision? I think, we shall never know how all this came into being. In the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, the process of creation is compared to a spider weaving forth the web out of itself and then entering into it and later on with-drawing itself from it again. Perhaps the Supreme and its manifestations have always been there, the latter existing some times in a potential and some times in a manifest form. The spider and its

web-making have gone on from all eternity. It is in the nature of human thought to seek the beginnings of all phenomena. The right view seems to be to regard being and becoming as two indivisible parts of one whole. Where being is, becoming also must be, and becoming naturally cannot take place without Being as its substratum. In the later-day *Vedānta*, the world came to be regarded as an unreal illusion or as an unsubstantial magical show which somehow appears on and disappears from the bosom of the Absolute without causing any change in it. These are some of the imaginative efforts on the part of man to understand the relation between reality and its appearances.

No Hindu philosophy believes in a fixed time of creation, however far back it may be placed. What we call the universe is a continuous creation, in which the birth, continuance and dissolution of worlds take place in ever-succeeding cycles. In other words the ultimate reality and its manifestations have always gone on together. Just as fire and heat go together, the ultimate reality and its Śakti potential or manifest, always go together. If God is, His world also must be, and this has had no beginning and will have no end.

The *Sāṅkhya* system as it is commonly known, regards all objects and phenomena as the outcome of two principles Prakṛti and Puruṣa i.e. matter and consciousness. They are the two ultimate principles incapable of being resolved into each other! *Gītā* accepts this dualism, but regards both

Prakṛti and Jīva as eternally contained in God. They form the two natures of God, lower and higher, eternally present in him, and these together give rise to the multitudinous phenomena of the world.

The two principles Prakṛti and Jīva-Bhūta of the *Gītā* seem to correspond, to a large extent, to the two attributes of God, extension and consciousness, as propounded by Spinoza. Both of these natures (Prakṛtis) or in the words of Spinoza, the two attributes of God, appear in various modes. All the material objects in their various forms are the modes of extension or the lower nature of God, while conscious mental processes taking place in individuals are the modes of consciousness. The individual souls in the *Gītā* are sparks as it were from the infinite cosmic self which appear as separate entities on account of their association with physical bodies. The term spirit stands for both the world-soul as well as individual soul.

The highest reality thus comprises in itself the essence of matter and the essence of spirit, the latter being superior to the former. Commenting on the view of Mc Taggart, an eminent modern British philosopher, Rudolf Metz, says, "He regards the self as an independent entity, sui-generis, a spiritual substance existing entirely in its own right and completely individual so that each is fundamentally different from every other. In the *Gītā* also souls are regarded as eternal just as matter is eternal. They are not regarded as coming into being at any particular

time. They have always been there, but they are not spoken of as completely individual and disconnected with the highest reality. Matter and souls are spoken of as eternal portions of the Supreme and are united in Him. They are not independent principles, as it came to be believed in latter-day *Sāṅkhya.*

The Idea of Puruṣottma—In Chapter XIII the *Gītā* speaks of Kṣetra (Body. Prakṛti) and Kṣetrajña (Puruṣa or soul) as two principles constituting the nature of man. The next Chapter (XIV) is devoted to elucidating the three guṇas or modes of Kṣetra or Prakṛti. In the following chapter i.e. Chapter XV we have, it seems, an expression of the author's view on the nature of Puruṣa. Here he speaks of three Puruṣas, the Kṣara (divisible or perishable), the Akṣara (indivisible or imperishable), and Puruṣottma (Supreme Being). According to C. Thompson the individual souls are Kṣara or the divided portions of Supreme Being. Over and above the individual souls, there is the world soul or cosmic soul, "which pervades and enlivens all matter and even exists in man as the vital energy which sets in motion the corporeal faculties, consciousness and intelligence" (C. Thompson. the *Bhagawad Gītā*, introduction). This universal spirit present throughout the world, guiding its movements and providing the urge for its evolution is the Akṣara puruṣa or the one indivisible soul of the *Gītā.* According to some writers individual souls are differentiated portions of this cosmic Puruṣa.

In addition to these two is the Supreme Puruṣa called Puruṣottma, the Supreme which is the ultimate reality comprising in itself all essences which, between themselves, bring into manifestation all phenomena and existences of the world. The Akṣara and the Supreme being are in many places identified with each other by the use of the first person in relation to both of them. Akṣara may thus be regarded as "the Supreme Being himself in his character of pervader and enlivener of matter than as an individual emanation from him, (*ibid* introduction).

We have given above the interpretation of the three puruṣas, as given by C. Thompson in his *Bhagawad Gītā*. This is, however, not the usual interpretation. Most writers on the *Bhagawad Gītā* interpret Kṣara as material nature on account of its constantly undergoing changes in form. Prakṛti, according to them is described as Puruṣa because ultimately it is also a portion of the highest Puruṣa or Puruṣottma. Akṣra, or this view, stands for the individual souls as well as the cosmic soul; Puruṣottma being the Highest Being or the Absolute. The distinction between Kṣara and Akṣara is on a par with that of Kṣetra and Kṣetrajña in Chapter XII and that of Parā Prakṛti and Aparā Prakṛti in Chapter VII. To Thompson and some other writers it appears most unusual to speak of the forms of Prakṛti as Puruṣa. Generally the term Puruṣa is used in contrast to that of Prakṛti. It however, seems that the author

of the *Gītā* takes certain liberties in the use of terms. If in Chapter XV he seems to speak of Prakṛti as Kṣara Puruṣa, in Chapter VII he speaks of soul as Prakṛti though he adds the adjective aparā to it.

In this connection, the view of Sri Aurobindo is worth considering. He says "Kṣara Puruṣa is the Self reflecting the changes and movements of Nature, participating in them, immersed in the consciousness of the movement, and seeming in it to be born and to die, increase and diminish, progress and change. Atma as the Kṣara, enjoys change and division and duality, controls secretly its own changes, but seems to be controlled by them; enjoys the oppositions of pleasure and pain, good and bad, but appears to be their victim; possesses and upholds the action of nature, by which it seems to be created. For always and inalienably, the self is Īśwara, the Lord.

Akṣara Puruṣa is the self, standing back from the changes and movements of nature, calm, pure, impartial, indifferent, watching them and not participating.........

Para Puruṣa or Puruṣottma is the self containing and enjoying both the stillness and the movement, but conditioned and limited by neither of them. It is the Lord, Brahman, the All, the Indefinable and Unknowable. It is this Supreme self that has to be realised in both the unmoving and the mutable.*

According to Śri Aurobindo, these Puruṣas are

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*Sri Aurobindo Īs' Upaniṣad pp. 55-56.

the three states in which the Ātmā represents itself to the consciousness of an individual, dependent on the relations between Puruṣa and Prakṛti or Soul and Nature. The individual self, in one state immerses itself altogether in the changing mental states and the worldly phenomena. It does not realize its separate identity apart from the inner and outer movements. In this state, it is called the Kṣara Puruṣa. In the next higher state, it learns to stand apart from the changes and movements taking place within and without. It is the Akṣara Puruṣa in this state. The highest state of the Ātmā is to regard itself as one with the Supreme Lord, the source of both the moving and the unmoving states.

It thus appears that the Gītā's conception of the Absolute or the Supreme is not that of pure consciousness of Advaita Vedānta. It is an organic conception with Prakṛti and Jīva forming integral parts of the whole. As creation is not a process having its beginning in time, but a beginningless and endless succession of cycles of evolution and involution, it cannot therefore be said that there was ever a condition of reality in which selves and material existences were entirely absent. We find them now and so they always have been. The Non-dualistic *Vedānta* on the other hand regards pure consciousness as the only reality, everything else being illusory and only seemingly existent. This, as we have found is not the view of *Bhagawad Gītā*. The ultimate reality according to it is the whole existence and infinitely

more than that. From this point of view, everything that we see is a manifestion of the Supreme and therefore the Supreme itself. "I am the taste in Waters, the light in the Moon and the Sun. I am the syllable Om in all the Vedas, the sound in the Ākāśa, vitality and strength in man and smell in the earth. I am brightness in the flames, vitality in all beings and power of austerity in ascetics, O son of Prithā, I am eternal seat of all existing things, I am intellect of the wise and strength of the strong free from passion .... All states and dispositions whether good, bad and indifferent, proceed from me alone. I am not in them they are in me" (VII. 8-12). The last sentence means that the Supreme is not wholly contained in its manifestations. He is all these things and transcends them at the same time.

The different aspects and manifestations of the Absolute Being are further described under various names such as Adhyātma, Adhibhūta, Adhidaivata, and Adhiyajña. In verses 29 and 30 of chapter VII it is declared that "those who take refuge in me and strive for deliverance from old age and death, they know the Brahman, the Adhyatman and all about them ; they who know me as Adibhuta, Adhidaivata and Adiyajña, and even so at the hour of death, they know me indeed." It is thus clear that these names represent the different characters and aspects of the Supreme Being. Brahman which has been mentioned first may be regarded as a general name including the remaining four. The Supreme Being as the abode of individual

souls is known as Adhyātma. It is the Absolute Being viewed in relation to the individual selves. Under this aspect he is called Adhyātma. Adhibhūta is Supreme Being as present in all beings or things of the world. Under this character it is the basis or support of all existing things. As Adhideva, the Supreme Being presides over all shinning ones or the devas, the cosmic forces like the sun, the moon, fire, wind, rain etc. And as Adhiyajña, he is envoked in all sacrificial and religious acts. As an object of worship and sacrificial offerings he is Adhiyajña.

All this description aims at conveying the idea of the universality of the Supreme Being. He is in everything that exists. Nothing falls outside him "There exists nothing animate and inanimate which is without me" (X. 39). In the ecstasy of the glorious divine vision, Arjuna cries out "I bow down to Thee on all sides, in front, behind, everywhere. Oh, thou all boundless power and infinite strength. Thou comprehendst everything and therefore thou art all" (XI. 40). We are left in no doubt as regards the conception of God in the *Gītā* because it occurs in a number of places throughout the book.*

We find a considerable resemblance between the metaphysical position of Loyld Morgan, a British Philosopher and that of the author of the *Bhagawad Gītā*. Loyld Morgan bases his philosophy on three assumptions. In the first place he assumes the

(*Chap. IX, 37-39, X. 20-39, XI. 9-31, VII. 7-11 etc.)

existence of a physical world of things or events. Secondly he assumes that there is a complete co-relation between psychic and material phenomena. Neither of them exists independently of the other. They are always together. Where there is mind, there is also matter and vice versa. The real world therefore is psycho-physical in character. In the *Gītā*, Prakṛti and Jīva Bhūta are regarded as two principles eternally present in the ultimate reality. Though it is not made clear whether there is a psychic complement in every physical event, but there cannot be any mental phenomenon, according to the *Gītā*, without a material component. It may however, be presumed, that, according to the *Gītā*, there should be, even in inorganic physical objects, an admixture of the psychic factor which gives it direction and a place in the orderly system of nature. As long as the world-process lasts, the physical and the psychic are found inseparably together at all levels of existence. At the material level the psychic element is not apparent and remains in a dormant stage. At higher levels the latent psychic element more or less manifests itself. At the human level its existence remains no longer in doubt. It is, in this way, that Loyld Morgan reconciles his doctrine of emergent evolution with that of the constant togetherness of mind and matter.

The third assumption of Loyld Morgan is that there is a divine operative power which reveals itself in all phenomena and expressions. Without this

power nothing would happen. It is, constantly and at all times, active in all happenings and events. In the *Gītā* also Śri Kṛṣṇa says, that if God were to become inactive even for a moment, all the worlds would perish. According to Morgan, science can afford to remain agnostic and to ignore the question of the primal cause of things, but systemic philosophy cannot do without it if it is to properly account for the whole course of development. Without an inherent causal urge or impulse in the hearts of things, the whole course of evolution remains un-intelligible.

According to the *Gītā* also, God is present in all manifestations. There is no beginning or creation in time of the world-process. It has been going on eternally in never-ending cycles, but this eternal orderly going on cannot be rationally explained without the category of a primal causal urge.

The Problem of Evil. We come across plenty of evil in the world in the form of sin and suffering. Could we not have had a better world ? ask many people in despair, and yet when asked to describe such a world they naturally, find themselves in a state of confusion. It would be safe to assume that there could not have been a world without the element of imperfection thrown in. Imperfection and progress go together. If everything were perfect, there would be no scope for progress, no incentive for work and no problem of spiritual growth for a human being. In short, everything would be static ; there would be no movement what-so-ever. As a writer puts it, only

the world as we have it "is better fitted to be a nurse of what is latent in human character than any carefully adjusted scheme of moral discipline. Nature is more than a training school for moral virtues." For *Gītā* and in fact for all orthodox Hindu systems of philosophy evil and suffering have their own necessary place in the cosmos. We have already given in detail the conception of ultimate reality as it is found in the *Gītā*. Given reality as it is, comprising in its range, material essence and individual souls, it could manifest itself only in the form of the world as we have it, or a similar world though of a different complexion, providing a base for the souls to gradually ascend to the highest ideal. In the transmigration of a soul from one stage of development to another there is no place for death or annihilation. Suffering and pain are necessary ingredients in the evolving process for the attainment of the divine status. If the end is so glorious, pain and suffering in the way can be easily borne. We know that man has the power to fight against evil in all its forms and bring about a better state of things in the world from economic, political, social and moral points of view. A man may have to go through great sufferings but he knows that it is not the end of life and that there is a future life and yet another life to bring the ultimate goal nearer and nearer.

According to the *Gītā*, the association of soul with the three guṇas, specially the Rājas and Tāmas, brings with it all evils and sufferings and yet without

this association, no movement towards higher life is possible. It is the suffering involved in a particular pattern of life, which makes us search for a better way of living and leave behind us the imperfect way, in our march towards the highest ideal. These three qualities of nature, working in man, are the cause of all his actions whether mental or physical. He is to conquer the passionate (Rājas) and slothful (Tāmas) aspects of his nature with the help of the goodness (Sattva) element. But the Sattva guṇa like the other two guṇas, also springs from nature, and so the divine man has to rise above the quality of goodness as well. No quality functions singly ; there is always the presence of the other two qualities, though at a particular time one of them predominates over the others. Therefore, the only way to throw over the ascendancy of nature or Prakṛti is to become a Triguṇātīta by rising above all the three guṇas of nature. When this stage is reached, there is no evil left in the individual, but till then some sort of suffering would remain the portion of every living person.

Chapter II

Body, Mind, Reason and Ego

The *Bhagawad Gītā* begins its teaching with a statement of the distinction between body and soul. The body as such is perishable, the soul on the other hand "is never born, nor does it ever die, nor having once been does it ever cease to be. Unborn, eternal, permanent and ancient, it is not slain when the body is slain". (II 20). In Chapter XIII again a distinction is made between the field (body) and the knower of the field (Soul). The soul is described as an eternal portion of God. It takes the form of an empirical individual when it is associated with the senses, the mind, the buddhi and the ego and it is then called the Jīva. The Jīva goes through a succession of births as the result of the binding effects of its actions, till it is finally delivered from the round of births and deaths upon the dawning of spiritual knowledge.

The body, the senses, the mind, the buddhi and the ego are the evolutes of Prakṛti which includes, within its range, the five elements of matter (ether, air, fire, water and earth), five objects of sense (sound, touch, colour, taste and smell), the ten senses, the

mind, the ego, the intellect, and the primordial substance. These twenty four principles are various forms of the original Prakṛti, and seem to be borrowed from the *Sānkhya* system which must have been in vogue when the *Bhagawad Gītā* was composed. Prakṛti includes both matter and mind, the latter being only a subtle manifestation of Prakṛti. The soul is separate from both matter and mind and corresponds to the twenty fifth category of the *Sānkhya*.

The *Gītā* is interested in the destiny of a human being, and so the nature of the physical world does not receive much attention. The existence of objective world is accepted and then no more is said about it. The *Gītā* does not, like the later-day Vedānta look upon the world as a mere illusion. Its existence is postulated, though no further importance is attached to it. In this matter, the *Gītā* agrees with most of the then-current philosophical views which look upon nature as something from which the soul is to realize its separateness.

The soul, in *Gītā*, as in other orthodox Indian philosophical systems, is distinguished not only from matter, but also from what is generally known as the mind. Like ether, air, fire, water and earth, the mental phenomena of sensation, feeling, desire, thought etc also arise from Prakṛti (Chapter VII, 4 and 5 & XIII, 5 & 6). Prakṛti comprises all that forms the object of consciousness. The *Gītā* thus distinguishes between the soul on the one hand and

the body, the senses, the mind, the intellect and the ego on the other.

The body is made up of five gross elements and is enlivened by a subtle vital force or *Prāṇa* in its various forms. It is the physical vehicle of the soul and it is through it that all activities of a living individual are carried out.

The senses are the means by which contact is made with the outside world. It is through the senses that physical objects act upon us and we in our turn act upon them. There are ten senses, five of them being organs of knowledge (Jñāna Indriyas) and the remaining five being the organs of action (Karma Indriyas). Through the five Jñāna-Indriyas, namely the eye, the ear, the tongue, the nose and the skin we get, respectively, the sensations of sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. The last may be regarded to include all kinds of sensations arising from skin, muscles, and internal organs. The five Karma-Indriyas consist of hands, feet, the speech organ, and the organs of generation and evacuation. They represent the diverse parts of the muscular system.

These organs, in course of their functioning, tend to develop likes and dislikes for particular objects and activities. In this way various desires and passions take their rise. Hunger, thirst, sex, desire for rest and comfort, desire to love (to caress) and to be loved are some of the desires connected with the activities of various senses. Out of these primary desires many other secondary desires take their rise. The important

point about the Indian doctrine of the senses is that all feelings and propensities in man are supposed to arise out of the contact of senses with various objects. If there were no sensations, internal or external, there would be no feelings and no desires. Desires and feelings are thus regarded as secondary phenomena, consequent upon the functioning of the senses. We may distinguish" says a writer, "two components in sensory experience. The one is the mere sensory apprehension of a stimulus, the other is our volitional reaction to it." The contact of our sense organs with the appropriate stimuli becomes the occasion for various emotions and desires to arise. Thus craving, aversion, fear, and other emotional reactions owe their origin to the primitive activities of various sense organs (II. 62. 63). The same object may arouse anger or its complement fear, according to the circumstances in which the object is experienced.

The Mind. According to the *Sāṅkhya* (XXXIII, *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*) mind along with buddhi and ahaṅkār (ego) are internal organs. The ten senses are external organs, presenting their objects to the above mentioned internal organs. The external organs act at the present time only ; the internal at all the three points of time.

Mind is thus an internal organ. It is said to partake of the nature of both sensory and motor sense organs, because both kinds of sense organs can function only when they are attached to the mind.

The eye, even when open, cannot see if the mind is not co-operating with it ; so it is really the mind which perceives through the eye and other sense organs. Similarly there would be no action of a motor sense organ, such as the speech organ for instance, if the mind were not associated with it. All these functions, therefore, belong to the mind. The senses, both sensory and motor are the means through which the mind acts in various ways. The mind further discriminates one object from other objects and assimilates an object to objects of its own class. It is the mind which by reflection recognizes an object as the member of a class.

The mind also serves as an instrument for co-ordinating the sensations coming through two or more sense organs.

Indian psychology, thus, accepts the existence of a subtle substance in the form of mind apart from the sense organs. Each individual has a separate mind of his own. It not only makes possible the sense impressions and bodily movements, but being an internal organ it is also a reservoir of all memories, images, ideas, desires, feelings and emotions. Unless mind were admitted as a separate instrument of the soul, imagining, thinking, remembering etc. could not be explained, according to the Indian view. All these mental processes arise out of and are subsequent to sense experiences. Most of the contents of the mind exist at the subconscious level in the form of Çitta. In the çitta, which is the deeper part of mind,

all sorts of subsconcious ideas exist in the form of traces (Vāsanās) and influence the activities of the conscious mind. At the conscious level our mind presents the appearance of a stormy and agitated sea with waves colliding with one another. One of the objects of spiritual discipline is to bring a state of peace and one-pointedness to the restless and ever-changing mind.

Modern Psychology does not accept mind as a separate principle apart from the various mental processes. The *Gītā* like all orthodox systems of philosophy regards mind as a separate internal organ. It makes a distinction between mind and soul. It is believed that the functions of mind become conscious only through the light of consciousness cast on it by the soul.

Mind is normally supposed to be incapable of attending to any one object for long. The restless nature of mind is referred to, in a number of places in the *Bhagawad Gītā*.

Buddhi or Intellect. Over and above the senses and the mind, there is a superior faculty called buddhi. Its function is to discriminate between true and false ; right and wrong ; expedient or non-expedient, in short, to form judgments and make decisions on various matters confronting an individual. The senses and the mind provide materials which the buddhi works upon for attaining special ends. The buddhi is a peculiarly human trait. It corresponds to

the active mental processes of reasoning, volition and active imagination. It stands for all thoughtful and voluntary activities of a human being. Determination which consists in the notion "this should be done" forms the characteristic function of the buddhi. Mind controls the senses and is, in its turn, controlled by the buddhi or the intelligent will. After an object has been properly discriminated by the mind the buddhi takes a conative attitude towards it and resolves upon taking a particular line of action in regard to it. In the *Bhagawad Gītā*, great importance is attached to buddhi which is regarded as the superior-most organ among the mental faculties. The exalted nature of buddhi is brought out by the fact that the *Gītā* calls its spiritual discipline by the name of Buddhi Yoga.

The proper functioning of the buddhi depends upon the tranquil nature of mind, and the supply of all necessary material for its use. If the mind has very few ideas or if it is very much under the influence of the senses (i.e. desire and passion), the buddhi is not able in that case to do its allotted work properly. In the Indian religious literature, the relation of the soul, the buddhi, the manas and the senses is described with the help of a striking simile. The human life is compared to a chariot drawn by powerful horses which are kept in check by the driver of the chariot by means of the reins. In the chariot sits the master who has nothing to do with the activities of the horses or the driver. If the driver,

is weak and does not know his job well, or if the reins are not strong enough or if the horses are too headstrong and turbulent, the chariot may, at any time, go off the road and be smashed to pieces. Here the soul is compared to the master who sits within and does nothing. His mere presence inspires the whole activity. The buddhi is the driver of the chariot and the horses stand for the senses. The driver can exercise control over the horses by the help of the reins which is the mind. (*Katha U. P.* III. 3, 4. *Maitri U.P.* II, 6).

Ego. At a very early stage in the mental evolution of a person, the idea of self or 'I' takes its rise. It is what is known as the Ahaṅkāra, in Indian thought. After an object is perceived by the mind, it is appropriated by the ego. The function of the ego is identified with self-appropriation (Abhimāna) or reference of experiences and actions to one's self. As soon as the ego makes its appearance, it takes charge, as it were, of the individual completely. Under its influence, a human being considers himself to be the doer of action, and the master of the body and the mind. When any action is done, the individual claims himself to be its doer. He takes credit for it and feels happy if it brings desirable consequences, and unhappy if contrary results appear. The ego becomes the representative of soul in a human being.

There is no self or ego-consciousness in a small child. It just lives, senses, feels and makes all sorts of movements ; but it has not yet learnt to regard itself

as the 'I' who experiences and owns the various mental processes. In a grown-up person the various mental events happen just as in a child, but he has, in the mean-time, learnt to regard himself as an ego separate from his own mental states and from other egos. In other words, a grown-up person develops in himself the 'I' consciousness. This, according to *Bhagawad Gītā*, is a false view of things, a distortion of truth, a myth born of ignorance (III. 29) and a source of evil and suffering (XIV. 5, XII. 23, V. 13).

The stage of self-consciousness is a higher stage than that of simple consciousness as found in lower animals and very young children. An animal or a small child does not develop any sense of 'I' nor does it sharply differentiate the various objects of the world. The world-view of an animal or that of an infant takes the form, chiefly of a "a big blooming, buzzing confusion", with objects running into one another, without any sharp contours or boundaries. It is an experience resembling, for the most part, that of ours when we are confronted, in a puzzle picture, with an assemblage of lines and patches out of which we are asked to discern the face of a man or the figure of an animal. The picture remains for us a meaningless puzzle, till we succeed, by turning it in all positions, in locating the man or the animal as the case may be. An animal lives, mostly on the impulsive plane. There is no possibility of growth or mental advance at the stage of simple consciousness. There is not much learning from experience, practi-

cally no memory of the past nor anticipation of the future. A cow or a dog in the present age is, in regard to its mental equipment, what its ancestors were, thousands of years ago. No progress what-so-ever has been registered.

With the dawn of self-consciousness in man the pace of mental evolution becomes rapid. Self-consciousness implies the development of memory and thought processes. Under the urge of enriching and expanding his ego, the human being has done wonderful things. He has cleared forests, increased the output of fields and mines and made himself immensely rich and powerful with the help of machines which he has himself invented. The urge of self-assertion latent in every man enables him, if the conditions are favourable, to make an all-round progress in various fields of human endeavour ; in art, science, philosophy and technical invention. The self-assertion of man has proved immensely useful for the advance of civilization. Urged on by a desire to achieve great things, man has explored the arctic regions, climbed great forbidding mountains and marched right into the heart of deserts and hither-to unknown lands. The ideal of freedom for which men, individually and collectively, have undergone incredible sufferings and boldly sacrificed their lives, ultimately derives its impetus from the instinct of self-assertion.

Self-consciousness has many achievements to its credit, but it is, at the same time, the source of

many evils as well. It leads to arrogance and pride, heartless competition, and the desire to exploit other persons for self-aggrandisement. Wars have been fought and whole populations decimated, so that a particular nation may emerge victorious and rule over the rest of mankind. Among members of the same community, it has caused a great misery through each one trying to make himself wealthy and powerful at the cost of others.

While we are to retain all the good points of the self-conscious plane of life, as, for instance, the sense of human dignity and spirit of adventure and freedom, we should know that there is a higher stage of consciousness as well. Self consciousness has to grow into the higher stage of enlarged cosmic consciousness in which the individual, instead of remaining a separate entity opposed to the rest of the universe, becomes an integral part of the whole ; a manifestation of the universal life pulsating in all objects of the world. This movement towards higher consciousness is the goal of religious quest and the *Bhagawad Gītā* is no less insistent, that an individual should clearly realise that egoistic strivings are based upon improper and inadequate knowledge. We are told that, when we suppose that we are doing something, it is Reality or God which works through us. Ego is only an unsubstantial formation which must give way to a truer view of things. Instead of thinking erroneously that I act or I feel or I think, the correct view is to know that reality or God thinks, feels and acts

through me. We are media or instruments through which reality carries on its work (XI. 33, 34). This view does not rob a person of the sense of responsibility or make him callous or indifferent in the performance of his various duties. When higher consciousness dawns upon an individual, all tendencies towards wrong doing, which after all arise out of egoism, naturally fall away.

The unsubstantial nature of the ego is further shown by the fact that it is liable to disintegrate as the result of various physical and mental causes. We are all aware of the phenomena of multiple personalities and of what happens in case of severe mental illnesses. The ego no longer remains what it was before the onset of these abnormal conditions. The unity of consciousness is broken and the individual is no longer what he previously was. In all these cases, consciousness remains but the sense of individuality is seriously impaired.

It is worth restating that the ego, unsubstantial though it is, is nevertheless a very important factor for the evolution of consciousness. Before the development of the ego, consciousness is wrapped up in matter and is virtually a slave to the movements of Prakṛti ; but with the appearance of the ego or self, consciousness acquires the power to observe what transpires within or without, and thereby to direct the movements of the mind. Consciousness, instead of being a slave to matter, gradually becomes its master and guides the various psychical activities by

giving its assent to them or by dissenting from them. At sub-human levels, evolution has taken place by the operation of natural forces alone, and has taken billions of years to accomplish its purposes. The rapid advance of humanity, during the last few thousand years, may be attributed to the ego-sense which includes intelligence and memory as its important elements.

But the ego has its own limitations. It is a good thing to be able to detach oneself from one's experiences and take any impartial survey of all of them. But it is most disastrous to lose one's sense of unity with the whole and to regard oneself as altogether a separate and independent entity with special interests of its own, regardless of what happens to other people. This is ignorance and the aim of various spiritual disciplines is directed towards the removal of this ignorance and the promotion of a sense of oneness with the basic reality.

Chapter III

The Soul

All orthodox systems of Indian philosophy distinguish the soul from the body and the mind. It is by the light of soul, that senses, mind, buddhi and ego become illuminated and their functions become conscious mental processes. The mental processes become what they are and are known as such, only when they are lighted up by the soul which is the principle of consciousness. The Indian psychology regards both the physical organism and the mind as bodies of the soul, the former being the gross body (Sthūla-Śarīra) and the latter, the subtle body (Sūkṣma Śarīra). When an individual dies, the gross body is left behind to decay or to be burnt up, but the subtle body, containing the impressions of psychical experiences in the form of Vāsanās accompanies the soul to the next stage of its evolution (Ch. XV. 7 and 8). The soul is never without the subtle body till it attains liberation. The existence of the subtle body becomes known to us in dreams, when it appears to us to be having its own independent adventures, while the gross body remains practically motionless. After death it is the subtle body

which survives and continues to exist independently, till it assumes a new physical body on a new birth. We shall have more to say on this subject in the section on reincarnation.

The *Upaniṣads* speak metaphorically of the five Koṣas or sheaths in which the soul remains encased, as it were, before it attains its final destiny of re-union with the absolute Reality. They are the Annamaya (the material) Kosa the Prāṇamaya (Vital) Koṣa the Manomaya (mental) Koṣa, the jñānamaya (reflective) Koṣa and lastly the Ānandmaya (Blissful) Koṣa. The last Koṣa is one in which the soul is free from all feelings of pain and pleasure and knowledge of objects. This Koṣa is present in a state of deep sleep and is a sheath of unconscious Vāsanās (tendencies). The doctrine of bodies of soul is a necessary corollary of regarding the soul as an independent principle apart from body and mind. The soul is separate and lonely only as long as it illumines one body or the other. When divested of all bodies, it becomes one with or finds its place in the universal consciousness itself.

Is there any evidence of the existence of the principle of consciousness distinct from the material body ? That we are conscious is known to each one of us intuitively. We also know that the body is made up of matter, and matter, as we know it, is inert, lifeless and without consciousness. Can we say that it is the part of the body known as the brain, which generates consciousness ? That inert and lifeless matter should

give rise to consciousness appears unbelievable and even self-contradictory, the matter of the brain being, in this respect, no better than that of other parts of the body. Not to speak of conscious processes, even the biological processes of growth, nutrition, self-healing and reproduction defy all attempts at a mechanical explanation. As we analyse the body from top to bottom, we find in it nothing but skin, bone, muscle, blood and other tissues, and ultimately all these are reducible to a number of elementary substances such as oxygen, hydrogen nitrogen, carbon, sulphur, calcium and so on. The body, in its ultimate analysis, is an organized combination of various material substances. We can imagine various material processes and events taking their rise from material substances, but to imagine consciousness as emerging from them is simply prepostrous. It is like imagining as a writer puts it, a flower to grow on the boiler of a railway locomotive or the Himālayas suddenly becoming conscious and breaking into laughter.

We, of course, require the help of the brain and the nervous system to bring us in contact with the events of outside world, and to preserve the traces of impressions received from outside. We can thus recall them, later on, and make use of them. In other words, for obtaining the knowledge of objects, we are dependent upon the brain and the nervous system, but as far as consciousness or awareness of them is concerned. no brain mechanism or any other bodily organ seems to be capable of generating it. Indian

psychology regards consciousness as different not only from the body but also from all objects presented to it, whether mental or physical. (*Bhagawad Gītā* Ch. VII. 5, Ch. XIII. 21-22). Consciousness and matter are conceived as two separate and co-eval principles, both eternally present in the absolute reality. Thus *Bhagawad Gītā*, in its analysis of the constituents of a human being, definitely posits the existence of consciousness as a separate and eternal principle and in this matter it follows the Sāṅkhya system of philosophy, which was prevalent in India along with upaniṣadic Vedānta, when the *Gītā* was composed and given its present form.

Consciousness is always the subject of experience. It cannot be made its own object. How then do we become aware of its existence ? According to one view in the very act of knowing an object, we become aware of both the object as well as the subject (*i.e.* consciousness) of which it is the object, just as a lamp, when lighted, reveals both itself as well as the objects lying in its vicinity. According to another view, the existence of consciousness is known by inference from actual experiences. In the absence of experiences as in deep sleep, we are not aware of consciousness. In wakeful life, we know objects directly and from this knowledge infer the existence of consciousness without which objects could not be known. The knowledge-relation implies a knower as one term of the relation. There is, however, another view according to which consciousness can be directly

intuited as the result of yogic contemplation. When the mind is emptied of all contents, the light of consciousness is supposed to shine in its native brilliance. We do not insist on acceptance of this view because yogic contemplation is not open to all. Taking human experience at the ordinary level, we can point to an intuitive feeling, in each one of us, of our being a conscious entity apart from the object or objects of which we are conscious.

The *Gītā* accepts the Saṅkhya view, that consciousness is without qualities and does not participate in any action. It is a passive spectator of the activities of various modes of Prakṛti. All acts are performed by nature. It is on account of delusion that a person regards his soul as the doer of action (III 27-28, XIII. 29, V. 8, 9, 14, 19). The function of consciousness, according to *Gītā*, is to behold the activities of matter without any participation in them. Our experience tells us that mere consciousness is not enough to make us act. There must be a desire or a feeling to provide the incentive for action. Mere awareness does not lead to action unless the element of desire is also present. And the element of desire or feeling is a mode of Prakṛti or nature. Though consciousness does not act, it is said to give its approval or to withhold it, according as the action is desirable or otherwise. It is only after the soul has approved or disapproved of an action, that the psycho-physical machinery begins to operate. Thus the mere presence of consciousness leads to the occurence of a bodily

movement just as the mere presence of the sun leads to the growth of vegetation or that of the moon to the ebb and flow of tides.

Let us try to understand this point of view a little more clearly. The vibrations of air affect parts of the ear and set them vibrating. These vibrations are carried by the auditory nerve to a certain region of the brain and only then the sound is heard. In hearing the sound the presence of consciousness is necessary, though it plays no part, whatsoever, in the previous bodily activities which make it possible for the sound to be heard. What is true of sound and other sensations is likewise true of emotions, volitions and other mental experiences. In affective and conative experiences as well as in thought-processes, certain bodily changes are responsible for what are registered in consciousness as emotions, desires and ideas. But along with the bodily changes the presence of consciousness is equally indispensible. Thus consciousness is not a mere epiphenomenon, playing no part whatsoever, in the life of an individual, as is affirmed by some materialistic thinkers According to *Sāṅkhya* and the *Gītā*, the conscious behaviour of a person is possible only when the physical changes in the body initiated by various stimuli, are brought in contact with consciousness and take the form of sensations, ideas, feelings, desires etc. Unless these mental processes appear there is no action on the ordinary human plane. But these mental processes *i.e.* sensations, feelings, ideas etc. are regarded by

Sāṅkhya as well as the *Bhagawad Gītā* as ultimately the modes of Prakṛti with the reflection of consciousness intimately blended with them. This is what is meant by saying that the buddhi (including manas and senses) is illuminated by the light of consciousness, and only then is it able to function as it does. The inevitable identification of consciousness with the operations of the senses, manas and buddhi give rise to the 'I' or ego consciousness of which we have spoken above.

The compound theory of Dr. Broad. Dr. Broad advances what he calls the 'compound theory' to account for the various mental phenomena. It is now generally accepted that all mental processes have bodily correlates and that none of them is independent of the body. There is a very close correlation between the mental and bodily processes. When destruction of the body takes place at death, it is very difficult to believe that the mind continues to exist after death exactly as it did before. There have, however, come to light certain supernormal phenomena which have been closely studied by men of great integrity and scientific attainments, and so there is no reason to doubt their authenticity. One of these phenomena is the alleged communication, through a medium, of many intimate facts connected with the life history of a dead person; facts which are known neither to the sitter nor to the medium but which are found true on later verification. These facts lead to the conclusion that a part of the mind of a dead person

somehow continues to persist. If the mind were to perish completely with the death of a person, how could these post-mortem communications be possible ?

On the basis of these indisputable phenomena, Dr. Broad propounds his compound theory, according to which what we call a mind is normally a compound of two factors, the psychic and the bodily. The characteristics of the mind, as we normally know it, depend jointly upon both these factors. Mental processes like reasoning, anger, love, desire etc. cannot be altogether ascribed to the body and yet we cannot have them without appropriate bodily changes. Thus for every mental happening we have to posit a psychic factor as well as the action of the body ; the mental happening being thus a composite of both the factors. According to the Hindu point of view, the psychic factor is the spirit which illumines the physical changes taking place in the brain and on account of which we have sensations, feelings, ideas etc. For instance, there would be no sensation or thought without the body nor would they occur without the psychic factor which makes them mental or conscious That Dr. Broad has more or less the same idea in his mind becomes clear from the way in which he uses his theory to explain the doctrine of reincarnation. "Instead of a single mind" says Dr. Broad, "which animates a sucessive series of organisms, we should have a single psychic factor which combines with such a series of organisms to form a successive series of minds. There might be intervals during which a

psychic factor has become dissociated from an organism which has died and has not yet entered into combination with an organism about to be born. During such intervals, this psychic factor might produce those abnormal phenomena which the ordinary spiritualist takes as evidence for the survival of a certain human mind."* Of course, according to the Indian point of view and also according to Dr. Broad himself, the psychic factor, as a result of its combination with a certain organism, is greatly changed, and carries with it, after death, the latent effects of its experiences in that body, so that it is not the same psychic factor at the time of the death of the body as it was before its association with it.

Expressions of Spirit. We have already said that senses, mind and intellect can carry on their respective activities only when the light of consciousness illumines them. There can be no seeing, hearing or thinking in the absence of consciousness. Conscious activity is thus a peculiar manifestation of the spirit. It is on account of the spirit that the eye sees, the ear hears and the mind thinks But apart from the normal conscious functioning of the body and the mind, there are occasional flashes of intuition in the realms of science, art, morality, and religion, which bear an unmistakable witness to the presence of the spirit No amount of intellectual or sensuous activity can account for the sudden emergence, into consciousness, of these

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*Broad. *Mind and its place in nature*, pp. 551.

inner revelations. "When the supreme light in us inspires the intellect we have genius, when it stirs the will we have heroism, when it flows through the heart we have love, and when it transforms our being, the son of man becomes the son of God."*

No individual has ever a complete understanding of his own self and its great potentialities. At any time they may unexpectedly irrupt into consciousness, and when such a thing happens, the individual is transformed altogether. The simple untutored Joan Arc, tending her flock of sheep in rustic surroundings is at-once transformed into a heroine who sees a vision of the freedom of France, convinces the king of the geniuneness of her vision, takes command of the army and drives the British forces out of France. It was really a marvellous feat. The emergence of great ideas in science, the composition of great works of art and display of marvellous qualities of leadership and heroism all point to the hiddin spiritual source which is somehow tapped and made to yield wonderful results.

The greatest expression of spirit, however, lies in the domain of mystic consciousness. By all accounts, this is the most wonderful manifestation of spirit, and when it happens, it brings about a most satisfying fulfilment of human life. It is, of course, true that, though the number of spiritual practitioners may be large, the lucky persons who actually attain the goal,

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*Radhakrishnan. *An Idealistic View of Life*, p. 206.

are very few. It is doubtful if any person, by his efforts alone, can achieve the mystic goal, unless he is born with a large mystic endowment.

It is only when the spirit is awakened in us in one form or another, that we can really bring about a change in other people. We can emancipate them from shallowness of mind and infect their soul with our own fervour and enthusiasm, if we have touched the heights of spirit in ourselves. It is not enough to be learned. Unless we have in us the enthusiasm and fervour and deep love of the superior souls, nobody will come to listen to us. When the glow of spirit surrounds a man, the people flock to his banner as moths rush to the light.

We thus find that at the level of spirit new aspects of reality reveal themselves. The greatest realisation, when it comes, is the feeling of oneness with the whole Being. When the spirit is dominant, all distinctions between self and self lose their importance and the inward conviction of oneness supervenes. The same universal spirit is realised as present everywhere, in all objects and persons. We may not, all of us, be endowed with the mystic vision, but there is no doubt that there appear, in every age, individuals with mystic realization, and it is these people who bring to us the spiritual message of the unity of all beings.

The Theory of Reincarnation.

From the time of *Upniṣads* onwards, belief in rebirth has been a constant feature of Hindu thought.

Gītā shares this belief in rebirth. In Chapter II, in a number of beautiful verses, Śrī Kṛṣṇa speaks to Arjuna about the immortality of soul and its migration through various bodies one after the other. (Ch. II. 12-13, 20-25). The belief in reincarnation was held by a number of ancient races, for instance the Greeks, as appears from the writings of Pythagoras and Plato. Some of the Hebrew prophets also seem to have held this belief. In modern times, a number of eminent thinkers such as Hume, Schopenheur, Mc Taggart etc. have shown their liking for the theory of metempsychosis.

Ever since the establishment of the Society for Psychical Research in 1882, a strong evidence for man's survival of bodily death has accumulated from various sources. The evidence is so convincing, that it has led some of the top-most scientists and thinkers of the world to accept the fact of survival after death. From various experiments, conducted with the help of persons with psychical endowment (known as mediums), under scientifically controlled conditions, it has been found that communications are received from a deceased person, of intimate personal facts which were known only to the dead person and his very near relatives. There is no possibility for the medium to know those facts. Of one such medium who came to be known as Mrs. Piper, William James the great philosopher of America wrote as follows. "In the trances of this medium, I cannot resist the conviction that knowledge appears,

which she has never gained by the ordinary waking use of her eyes, ears and wits. What the source of this knowledge may be, I know not ... but from admitting the fact of such knowledge I can see no escape".

There is a strange case concerning a lady, Mrs. Hugh Talbot who, in the course of a sitting at a seance with a medium, was told by her dead husband (of course through the medium) that among his relics, she would find a note-book bound in black leather, and if she turned to page 13 of that book, she would find in it a written note by him on a subject in which he had been interested throughout his life. Mrs. Talbot found the note-book as described and on page 13, she discovered the writing referred to by the medium. Now this fact was not known to Mrs. Talbot herself so there could be no question of mind-reading on the part of the medium. The fact was not in the mind of Mrs. Talbot who was at that time the sitter in the experiment. There are numerous other similar cases recorded in the proceedings of the Psychical Research Society. It is worth noting that no fact is allowed to get into the proceedings of the society, unless it has been thoroughly investigated by a number of eminent scientists. After a life-long study of these strange facts, Sir Oliver Lodge, a world-renowned scientist, came to the conclusion that "the hypothesis of surviving intelligence and personality, not only surviving but anxious and able with difficulty to communicate, is the simplest and most straight-forward and the only one that fits all the facts."

One may very well conclude from this evidence, that there is, at least, some part of this personality which, somehow, remains intact even after the death of a person. It is in conformity with the view advanced by some *Upaniṣads*, namly, that while the gross body is left behind after death, the subtle body consisting of mental traces accompanies the individual Jīva. In fact the Jīva is nothing else than the subtle mental body illuminated with the light of consciousness. The *Gītā* expresses this idea in the following words. "A fragment of my own self, having become a living soul, eternal in the world of life, draws to itself the senses of which the mind is the sixth, that rests in nature."

"When the Lord takes up a body and when he leaves, he takes these senses and mind and goes even as the wind carries perfumes from their places."

"He enjoys the object of senses, using the ear, the eye, the touch sense, the taste sense, and the nose and also the mind."*

Dr. Radhakrishnan says by way of a comment on these verses that "The subtle body accompanies the soul in its wanderings through cosmic existence."

The *Gītā*, however, does not simply believe in men's survival of bodily death. Like all Indian philosophical systems, it accepts, further, the view that after a longer or shorter existence in a disembodied

*XV. 7–9. Dr. *Radhakrishnan's Translation.*

condition, the soul is born again and yet again till it is free from all attachments, and achieves enlightenment or Jñāna. It sometimes happens, though very rarely, that a child is born who remembers, for sometime, the events of his previous birth. Such cases have been frequently noted and some of them have been found to be true after careful investigation. Take, for instance, the following incident which created a great sensation, some years ago, at Delhi, in India, and was studied by a number of eminent people. I received, in those days, a typed report from a professor friend of Delhi University, who had made a personal study of the case. A little girl of five years was one day playing with her father when a visitor came to see him. The girl showed embarrasment on seeing the stranger and whispered into the ear of her father that the visitor was her husband in the previous life. When she was asked, she correctly though with some hesitation, gave the name of the visitor and declared that both of them lived at Mathura in a particular street. These facts were corroborated by the astonished visitor. The news of this incident spread in the city and it drew, to the house of the girl's father, a number of interested people of all religions. In order to leave no room for doubt the small girl was taken to Mathura in the company of a number of persons. On arriving at Mathura, she was placed in the front seat of a horse-drawn carriage and was asked to direct the carriage to the house where she had lived in her previous existence. She did so

without any difficulty. Of course, the family was not living in that house at that time, but the so-called husband declared that he had been living in that house before the death of his wife, though the family had moved to another house afterwards. The girl told the assembled people that her husband and herself had buried a sum of three hundred rupees at a particular spot in the house. This fact was declared to be true by the gentleman whom she called her husband of the previous life. She told many other things which were found to be true. No one, among the people present on the occasion, had any doubt left in his mind, that the girl was speaking from her personal knowledge.

This is a real incident and not an imaginary tale. Some years ago, I read, in an Urdu book on reincarnation by the late Professor Brij Narain, more than a dozen cases which he had culled from reliable authorities, of children belonging to a number of western countries, who had similarly narrated events of what they called their past lives. So these cases occur in all countries. Sometimes they are treated as merely the outcome of the child's imagination and so no notice is taken of them. But sometimes a case is carefully investigated leading to the verification of facts described by the child.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, in the fourth chapter of the *Gītā* that, while Arjuna had forgotten his previous lives, he himself (Kṛṣṇa) distinctly remembered them. The Buddha also declared, many a time, during his

discourses that he had a clear memory of his previous births. The question is, how would you explain these facts, the genuineness of which is above all doubt whatsoever ? Some writers, Professor Brij Narain for example, have tried to explain them on the hypothesis of telepathy. But it is, as already stated, a far-fetched and the least convincing explanation of these strange phenomena, specially when the facts revealed by the medium are not known even to the sitter or to any other living person whose mind the medium may be supposed to have read. We found this in the case of Mrs. Talbot described above. The simplest and the most plausible hypothesis is that of reincarnation. I think that when some thinkers of the *Upaniṣads* proclaimed the doctrine of transmigration of soul for the first time, it might have been on the bases of some such facts. It was, most probably, the personal knowledge of these facts, and not mere speculation, which led to the formulation of the theory of transmigration on the part of these thinkers.

In course of time, the doctrine took a most sombre and melancholy form. It came to be believed that a person may have, as a result of evil action, again and again, to descend into the bodies of lower animals leading a dirty and miserable existence, before there could be any chance of liberation. In our view, the doctrine would not have taken a pessimistic colouring, if it had been assumed, as many thinkers in the West now-a-days do, that after a soul, in course of its evolution to higher and higher forms, reaches the

status of a human being, it no longer descends to lower orders of being, but keeps on moving in human or higher planes in successive births.

The result of this depressing interpretation of the doctrine of reincarnation was that the fact of being born in the world as a human being, with its subsequent prospect of being born, again and again, in all sorts of existences, came to be regarded as a most painful thing. The act of getting out of the world (Sansāra) or the cycle of births and deaths, became the chief end of life, at least among the wise and enlightened people of the country. This oft-recurring note of pessimism is mostly found in the post-Vedic phase of Indian culture. It appears that, to the wise men of the age, the world had lost all charm, and renunciation of its activities came to be looked upon as the only means of achieving liberation. The *Bhagawad Gītā* is one of the very few ancient books of post-Vedic age, which denounces the life of inactivity and gives a new interpretation of the concept of renunciation. We are asked to participate in the affairs of the world and yet to remain detached and independent in our outlook. Though it did not go far enough, it provided a great corrective to the pessimistic view of life.

Chapter IV

The Conception of Karma (Action)

The individual goes from birth to birth to work out the effects of actions performed in past lives. On this point all systems of Indian thought are agreed. There is no action without a cause nor is it without an effect. The past, the present and the future are linked together as one whole. The basis of all actions lies in our desire, thought and will. "As is a man's desire so is his thought and as is his thought so is his action, and as is his act so is his achievement."*

When we talk of the effects of our past or present Karma, we generally think in terms of reward or punishment. As a matter of fact, the doctrine of action simply refers to the consequences inevitably following every action, whether good or bad. "It is really a law of justice. Justice is the law of the moral life exactly as cause-and-effect is the law of the natural world. What one sows one must reap." Our actions leave their effects

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*Brihad U. P., IV. 5.

on us in the form of *Vāsanās* or *Sanskāras* (tendencies). These latent effects become the positive cause of our being born again. The only way to effect an escape from the chain of births and deaths is to prevent the *Sanskāras* or tendencies from being formed in the mind. To all appearance, this appears to be almost an impossible task. Throughout our life-time, we perform all sorts of actions according to our nature, and so we are liable to reap their consequences in a seemingly never-ending chain of rebirths. A solution proposed by some thinkers to meet this emergency, is to renounce all action excepting the minimum amount necessary to keep the body alive. In order to prevent new tendencies from being formed, one should not act at all or at least should try to approach this ideal as far as possible. In course of one's life-time the old tendencies or Vāsanās which are called into action by the circumstances amidst which the individual is born, are worked out in the form of various pleasant and unpleasant experiences. This is technically called Prārabdha Karma i.e. tendencies in active manifestation. But as the individual is not performing any new action, no new tendencies are formed and, therefore, no new rebirth takes place. So, according to this point of view, a life of asceticism and renunciation is necessary "Not only because it approximates to a state of in action and so tends directly to obliterate Karma but also because withdrawal from the world is a kind of insurance against being entangled with worldly

desires, which lead many astray from the true goal of emancipation "*

There are three kinds of Karma (i) the Sañcita Karma which comprises the whole mass of accumulated latent effects of the past lives including those effects which have not yet begun to be worked out. These Karmas continue to exist in the form of Vāsanās and may become the cause of subsequent births. (ii) Prārabdha Karma. It is that part of Sañcita Karma, which has become active in the present life and is bearing fruit. (iii) The Vartmāna and Agāmi Karma. It is the new Karma which we are accumulating or shall accumulate during our life-time by our present and future actions. Each one of us, as a rule, is busy making new Karma and experiencing the effects of the past ones.

The author of the *Gītā* does not condemn the way of renunciation for the attainment of freedom from the effects of Karma. He accepts it as one of the ways recommended by wise men. (XVIII. 3). But at the same time, he recommends his own way as being definitely superior to the way of renunciation. An action may be physical or mental. The author has no difficulty in showing that no person can help doing action in some form or another. Life and action go together. Wherever a man may go, however much he may cut himself off from worldly contacts, action will always follow him. (III. 5). To

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*Egerton, *Bhagawad Gīta* p. 57.

imagine, that a life of asceticism and Sanyāsa (renunciation) will enable a person to lead a life of inaction, is a vain hope which can never be fulfilled. To desist from outward action, while the mind is busy with all sorts of ideas and plans, does not indicate a state of inaction (III. 6). And the method which the *Gītā* proposes under the circumstances is not to abstain from action but to perform all one's actions in a disinterested manner without being emotionally attached to their consequences. Unselfish action done as one's duty, without any desire for personal gain, leaves no adverse effect on one's mind. "Your right is only to act and not to worry as to the consequences of your act. You should, therefore, engage in action without concerning yourself with its fruit. Nor should you give yourself over to inaction". It is the emotion or passion behind action; love or hatred-which impels us to seek personal satisfaction in its result. Once we rise above personal desire to the plane of disinterested performance, our action loses its power to create bondage. Action performed in this spirit becomes a sort of inaction. "He who sees inaction in action and action in inaction is wise among men. He is a Yogi with all actions duly accomplished". (IV. 18). Such action leaves us quite free. We find this view appearing again and again in many places in the *Gītā*. (II. 38, 47. III. 19. IV. 19-23, V. 3, 20). In some verses, the author of the *Gītā* condemns those people who take recourse to harsh austerities after giving up the prescribed duties of life. (XVII. 6).

As to what concrete actions a man ought to perform, the *Gītā* has no definite instructions to give. But we can find out from a number of verses scattered throughout the book, what the views of the *Gītā* are on this subject. In the first place we are expected to carry out the duties enjoined upon us by the Śāstras and religious scriptures (III. 9. IV. 23). Acts of sacrifice. penance, charity are not to be given up: only they are to be performed in the right spirit (XVIII. 3, 5, 6).

Secondly we are asked to perform all those actions which devolve upon us in consequence of our place or station in life. Each one of us is born in certain circumstances and has, for that reason, certain obligations to fulfil, for instance as a member of one's family, as a neighbour, as a citizen and as a member of the profession which he follows. All these obligations are to be fulfilled in a spirit of disinterestedness and dutifulness. Each person, according to the *Gītā*, holds a certain position in the social system to which he belongs, or in the Chāturvarṇaya system which was in vogue when the author lived. According to this second meaning, the duties which we are to fulfil are obligated upon us by our Varṇa Dharma, or in other words. by our place in society.

In the third place, we are referred to a higher ethical standard in several verses of the *Gītā*. It is enjoined upon us that we are to look upon all beings as ourselves. All beings are one in God (V. 18, VI. 29, 30.) "Whoever looks upon all beings in the same

way as on himself and regards the pleasure and pain of all in a similar manner is really a great Yogi. The same idea is repeated in Chapter XIII. 28 and Chapter V. 18. The same self is in me and in my neighbour. Though outwardly different, we share in a common life. In other words, we are, all, children of the same father. So no one can claim a privileged position for himself or any special treatment different from what is given to others. This feeling of oneness with others brings about a reconciliation of egoism and altruism and places before us a high ethical standard for determining our duties in life.

Idea of Sacrifice. The same idea is presented to us in the form of the law of sacrifice as propounded specially in chapters III and IV. In chapter III. 10-13, the Vedic conception of the inter-change of gifts between gods and man is accepted as the basis of the idea of sacrifice. It can be interpreted afresh as implying the relation of inter-dependence of all beings with one another and with the forces of nature. The world is so made that a give-and-take among its constitutent parts is constantly going on. In order to exist we have to take many things from others, and if we do not give back in return, we become great sinners. As a matter of fact all of us, even when we are pursuing our own individual interests on the conscious plane, do contribute thereby to social welfare, unless our acts are definitely antisocial. But this contribution, for the most part. is unconsciously made. What is wanted is

that in our various acts, social service should become the primary motive, the provision of our individual wants taking the secondary place. It means an inversion of our customary attitude towards work. A teacher or a doctor, for instance, actuated by this point of view, would regard his particular work as his social contribution and the chief mission of his life, leaving it to society to look after his individual requirements.

This is the basis of action which the *Gītā* puts in the place of the usual egoistic basis. As Mahātmā Gāndhi points out in his commentary on the *Bhagawad Gītā*, the underlying idea is the achievement of purity and spirit of service. The meaning of the statement in the *Gītā* (X. 10), namely that sacrifice is with us from our very birth is that we are heavily indebted to the world for what it has done to us. Our primary duty is to pay off this debt and what we eat or enjoy should be the secondary result of the fulfilment of our obligations. This spirit ennobles even the meanest task. Whatever we do, small or great, is to be done in a spirit of service, without any desire of personal gain. The end placed before us is not that of enjoyment but of social welfare or Lokasamghra. We are all parts of the social organism and each one of us is to play his part not for personal comfort, fame or honour but because our position in society demands it of us. The individual is to gradually realise that "his life is a part of the action in nature, not a thing separate to be held and pursued for its own sake. He

regarde his enjoyments and the satisfaction of the desires as the fruit of sacrifice and the gift of the gods in their divine universal workings, and he ceases to pursue them in the false and evil spirit of sinful egoistic selfishness as if they were a good to be seized from life by his own unaided strength without return and without thankfulness. As this spirit increases in him, he subordinates his desire, becomes satisfied with sacrifice as the law of life and works, and is content with whatever remains over from the sacrifice, giving up all the rest freely as an offering in the great and beneficent interchange between his life and the world life."*

This is the solution which the author of *Bhagawad Gītā* offers for escape from the binding effects of our actions. It did not occur to many people, it seems, before Kṛṣṇa that one can remain free even while taking part in the active life of the world. From this point of view, action no longer remains a barrier to spiritual enlightenment. Karma which had become a sort of bugbear to earnest seekers of deliverance was robbed of its bondage-producing power. Instead of remaining a hindrance, it became a collaborator in the quest for spiritual peace and harmony.

Svabhāva and Svadharma. We find it stated, in a number of places in the *Gītā*, that our actions

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* Shri Aurvindo. Essays on the *Gīta*; Ist series pp. 162–163.

should as a rule, proceed from our Svabhāva. The Svabhāva represents the aptitudes and the temperament with which an individual is born. People differ from one another in Svabhāva. The influence of early social environment and later experience go a long way to mould it in a particular direction but they cannot effect a complete transformation or change in one's temperament. A person therefore, should know what his Svabhāva is, and on the basis of this knowledge, try to develop himself along the lines of his natural endowment. He should become the man, that nature intends him to be and only then can he make his contribution to the welfare of society. The importance of the development of one's personality, along the lines of one's Svabhāva is brought out in the following verses.

"Let a man elevate his self by his own self. He should on no account degrade himself. A man's own self is his friend and his own self can also be his enemy."

"To him who has conquered his lower self by his own higher self, his self is his friend, but to him who has not succeeded in controlling his lower self, his own self becomes his enemy" (VI. 5, 6).

The first task for a person. therefore, is to elevate himself, to develop his personality to its highest powers, before he can play his part in the field of social action. Our actions are to flow out of the fulness of our powers, and we can reach the height of our powers only if our development proceeds along lines laid down by our Svabhāva

or our psycho-physical make-up. If a person's attitudes and tastes are those of a scholar, it would be a tragedy if he becomes a business man or takes up any other career. In all efforts at self-improvement, the lower self of appetites and sensual desires has to be kept in check and properly regulated.

When a person has found his life-task, a task for which he is eminently fitted, he is to stick to it and should not allow himself to be drawn to tasks which appear more attractive but are not suited to his nature. (XVIII. 47).

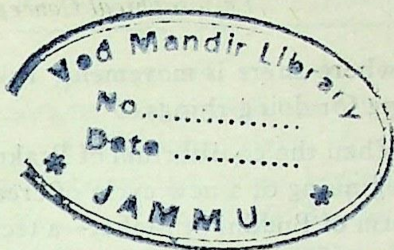
"Better is death in the fulfilment of one's own Dharma. To follow the Dharma of another is full of peril." (III. 35).

The action, occupation or work which is in consonance with one's Svabhāva is spoken of as *Svadharma* in the *Gītā*. It generally happens that sons follow the occupations of their fathers, but sometimes a person finds himself unable to take interest in his hereditary occupation. His Svabhāva rebels against it. In that case it would be a great mistake to bind him down to the work which the members of his family usually follow.

In the *Gītā*, the division of society into classes does not seem to be based on birth but upon quality and work. Some people are characterized by the qualities of purity, self-restraint and love of knowledge. They are known as Brāhmaṇs. Next in rank and importance

are the Kṣtriyas who possess energetic and virile nature and want to devote themselves to great achievements and ambitious projects. Such persons, apart from being energetic and pushing may also be generous and heroic ; the born leaders of men. Then there are people who are possessed of energy and ambition, but these are directed to amassing wealth and means of comfort. They do not care as much for honour or fame as for wealth. While courage is the quality of a Kṣtriya, prudence marks off the third type of men who are called Vaiśyas in Indian terminology. Such a person, according to the *Gītā*, tills the soil, tends the cattle, takes to buying and selling for profit, and organizes the industrial life. Besides there three classes, there is, in every society a large class of people who are not very intelligent, and therefore are capable of only the simplest tasks under supervision of others. They form the Śūdra class. This is the fourfold division of society, which has come down to us from ancient times.

This is a rough classification of individuals according to *Bhagawad Gītā*, but, as already pointed out, it is not based on birth. "The four fold social order was created by me, on the basis of quality and work" (IV 13). It was the quality which a person possessed and the work which he did, that determined his position in society, and not simply the fact that he was born in a particular family. This at least, appears to be the view of the author of *Bhagawad Gītā*.



Chapter V

The Doctrine of the Three Modes of Nature (Guṇas)

The *Sāṅkhya* system of philosophy breaks up prakṛti or material substance into three types of constituents called guṇas. The *Sāṅkhya* does not, like the *Nyāya-Vaiśesika* system, accept the existence of quality as a separate category apart from substance. Qualities, in *Sāṅkhya*, are units of substance. What appears as quality to us is a particular manifestation of the corresponding substance. A substance is only known by its quality. The *Sāṅkhya*, therefore, does not make any distinction between quality and substance. These qualities or units of substance are infinite in number and are classified into Sattva, Rajas and Tamas guṇas. The Sattva guṇas are "self shining, translucent and plastic." Mental phenomena such as thoughts, sensations, feelings, and desires are predominently constituted of Sattva guṇas. In gross material substances, the Tamas gunas predominate. They are characterized by inertia, dullness and massiveness. The Rajas guṇas provide movement, action and dynamic quality, and predomi-

nate where there is movement, energetic action and craving for doing things.

When the equilibrium of Prakṛti is disturbed at the beginning of a new cycle of creation, it first takes the form of Buddhi or Mahat—a technical name for the first stage of evolution in which there is present the collective mass of buddhis and minds of all Puruṣas, which had been absorbed into Prakṛti at the time of previous dissolution. That is the reason, perhaps, why the first stage of evolution is also called the Buddhi stage. Along with the collective Sattva mass the Tamas and Rajas guṇas are also held within the Mahat, which is the first evolute of Prakṛti. From the Sattva guṇas are evolved the buddhis, egos, manas and senses to be associated with individual puruṣas or souls, and from the Tamas guṇas are evolved, the five elements and five sensory qualities. The Rajas guṇas provide the dynamic element in the evolution of both the mental and physical categories of existence. The Rajas guṇa in itself has no evolute of its own.

As *Gītā* is concerned with the spiritual evolution of man, it makes use of the doctrine of guṇas, not to explain the constitution or evolution of material world, but to point out the basic differences in the temperaments of mankind and their reactions to all kinds of events and happenings. As the *Gītā* attaches a great importance to the theory of the guṇas, a clear understanding of the same is therefore essential. It is an attempt at psychological analysis of an individual,

The spiritual seeker is expected to understand his own personality, before be can usefully undertake to follow the discipline of self-improvement. In chapter XIV, a detailed exposition of the three psychological types of individuals is given (6-13, 16-18). The qualities of goodness, poise, harmony, mental illumination, purity, happiness and health go along with the predominance of the Sāttvika principle. Unrest, craving, over-powering passion, attachment, greed and urge for action are found in persons of rajāsic temperament. Dullness, ignorance, tendency towards indolence, inactivity and negligence, delusion and lack of illumination characterise all those persons who are born with a preponderance of Tamas quality. It does not mean that a person of Tāmasika nature does not feel any impulse at all or that he is inactive like a clod of earth. He is moved by impulses as other people are, but he makes no attempt to organise them with a view to realize certain ideals of life. He acts vehemently when an impulse is aroused in him, and after it is satisfied, he becomes quiescent again. He behaves more or less like an animal. His indolence and dullness arise out of the lack of any well-defined objectives of life.

All the three guṇas are found together in all persons, though they are present in different persons in different degrees. The aim of a person should be to develop the Sāttvika qualities in himself, to harness the Rājasic urge for action for the promotion of noble ends and to transform the inertia and indolence of

Tamas into the quality of tranquility and peace of mind. This is the aim of mental development and so every effort should be made to cultivate a virtuous and noble character. In the absence of high moral qualities, spiritual discipline has no meaning.

In the whole of chapter XVII and in the first 39 verses of chapter XVIII, the author of *Gītā* discusses a variety of subjects such as food, austerity, charity, faith, sacrifice, action, knowledge, the individual doer of action, steadiness and happiness, on the basis of the doctrine of three guṇas or modes of nature. For instance, in regard to the question of food we are told that people choose different articles of diet for eating, according as they possess sāttvika, Rājasika or Tāmasic nature. A person should, therefore, gradually change his diet, so that it may help him in cultivating sāttvika qualities. In performing acts of sacrifice, in giving charity to the needy, in leading a life of self-restraint and so on, a person of the sāttvika quality of mind is moved solely by the spirit of disinterestedness and dutifulness. He would not neglect his duties or perform them in a perfunctory and careless manner as a Tāmasic person is likely to do, nor will he, like a Rājasika person, perform acts of sacrifice or charity out of a desire to win fame or power or to impress other people. The whole teaching of the doctrine of guṇas is to make a person realize that, in all acts, the principle of goodness or disinterestedness is to take the leading role in life.

In the first three verses of Chapter XVI, the *Gītā*

gives in some detail a list of moral qualities which are said to constitute divine nature. Harmlessness, compassion, charity, forgiveness, freedom from anger, gentleness, modesty, self-control, steadfastness purity, courage and truthfulness are some of the qualities which are said to characterize a person of divine nature.

So great is the abhorrence which the *Gītā* feels for qualities designated as Asuri or demoniac, that it devote the rest of the chapter to their description, and holding them up to ridicule and condemnation. The *Gītā* has no good word for people who are given to arrogance, ostentation, pride, harshness, cruelty and insatiable desire for power, wealth and pleasures of life (XVI. 10-18). Again in verses 21 and 21, lust, anger and greed are spoken of as the three gateways to hell leading to the ruin of the soul. Only the person who can free himself from these evil passions, can reach the highest end of life.

It has already been stated, that the soul identifies itself with the buddhi and mind and so forgets its real nature, i.e., its descent from Universal consciousness. It may be said that a spark from Infinite consciousness lights up a living human organism, becomes an ego and forgets its divine source. The first thing which an individual has to do, is to bring into prominence the Sāttvika qualities of his mind. He must become a good man before he can become spiritually enlightened. But the Sāttvika qualities also belong to nature and so ultimately they too have to be transcended. "It (the

soul) rises from dull inertia and subjection to inertia, through the struggle for material enjoyment, to the pursuit of knowledge and happiness. But so long as we are attached, even though it may be to very noble objects, we are limited. There is always a sense of insecurity, since Rajas and Tamas may overcome the Sattva in us. The highest ideal is to transcend the ethical level and rise to the spiritual. The good man (Sāttvika) should become a santa (Triguṇatitta). Until we reach this stage, we are only in the making; our evolution is incomplete."*

A Triguṇāttīta is described in the *Bhagawad Gītā* as follows "He is said to have transcended the three modes of nature, O Pandava, who feels no aversion to illumination, craving and infatuation (the effects of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas) when they arise, nor does he long for them when they are absent; who living like one unconcerned, is never perturbed by these modes; who remains steady and unwavering, knowing only that it is the modes which act; to whom pain and pleasure are alike; to whom what is pleasant and what is unpleasant make no difference; who is firm-minded; to whom praise and blame are the same; who is the same in honour and dishonour, same to friends and foes and who gives up the sense of doership in action. He who worships me with an unswerving devotion, rises above these modes and becomes eligible for the attainment of the Brahman." (XIV. 22-26). The

* Dr. Radhakrishnan. *Bhagawad Gīta* p. 322.

description of a Triguṇātītta brings out clearly the *Gītā's* conception of a God-realized person.

Determinism and Freedom

There is an intimate relation between the doctrine of modes of nature and that of determinism and freedom. We shall, here, say a few words on this important question.

There are many verses in the *Gīta*, which propound the view that our actions arise out of our own nature. Even a wise man cannot do any thing against his nature. "All actions are the outcome of the working of the modes of nature. A man whose soul is deluded by "I consciousness" thinks that he is the doer (III. 27). Even wise men act according to their own nature. All beings follow nature. No efforts at repressing one's nature can succeed" (III. 23). Each one of us is born with certain innate traits or qualities, and in a particular environment which begins to mould us from our very infancy. Each step in our growth is governed by factors over which we have no control. In this way ideals are formed, conceptions of lower and higher values gradually emerge and our character assumes a well-defined form, with certain sentiments holding sway over the rest. These acquired dispositions and motives in course of time become the inspirer of our actions. But the natural desires do not altogether disappear leaving the field open for the free operation of acquired higher motives. They offer resistance, many a time, to our higher desires and the resistance is, some times,

so prolonged as to hold up the action for a considerable period. Different aspects of the alternative courses of action keep pressing their claims till ultimately, we seem to arrive at a particular decision. When this happens, we say that we have acted freely. We have, at the same time, an inner feeling of freedom. On the psychological level, this is all that falls within our experience. We have no knowledge of what takes place in the nervous system while the action is being held up. But there is no doubt that some sort of action goes on in our brain and the nervous system and what we call a decision is actually the resultant of the various processes set up in the body by stimulii provided by a particular situation. The author of the *Gītā* may be right when he says that a wise man who knows the truth, cannot help accepting the view that in seeing, hearing, walking, speaking and in performing other activities only the senses are acted upon by their objects producing certain mental states and leading to certain actions, and that he himself does nothing at all. (V. 8, 9). In chapter XVIII, it is stated in a most clear manner, that "God abides in the hearts of all beings and makes then go round and round by his power, as if they were mounted on a machine" (61).

Does it mean that the *Gītā* propounds a throughgoing determinism ? In a way it does. It would be quite irrational to assert that when ever we make a choice, we bring into being a state of things which is totally unconnected with the antecedent circumstances

of the situation. Even accepting the agent as one factor in the performance of an action, other factors are not ruled out. "Know from me, O mighty-armed Arjuna, the five factors which govern the performance of all actions, according to the *Sāṅkhya* doctrine. They are the physical body (the support of all action), the agent, the various instruments of action, the many kinds of effort, and lastly fate or providence." The self or agent is only one of the determining causes. In the absence of other factors, the agent alone would be able to accomplish nothing. According to *Sāṅkhya*, the self is simply a witness to the whole show. He is a mere spectator and takes no part in the actual performance of action. The action is accomplished by the modes of Prakṛti as mentioned above. But the presence of the agent in the form of a witnessing (and assenting) self is necessary for the Prakṛti to start its action. The agent is therefore described as one of the factors of action.

It seems to us that the *Gītā* does not accept freedom in the usual sense. We are told in chapter XI "I am death, the potent destroyer of the worlds. I have come hither to destroy mankind. Even if you were not to act, the warriors of the opposing army would all cease to exist. Therefore arise, obtain glory, vanquish your foes and enjoy a great kingdom. They have already been slain by me. You are to become only an instrument (for the accomplishment of this task)" (XI. 32, 33). Thus all action is actually performed by the Lord of universe. We are only

instruments in His hands. It is our ego-sense which makes us think that we are the agents or doers of action. As the action is performed through us, we arrogate to ourselves, on account of ignorance, the agency of the action. The author of the *Gītā* wants us to shed off the ego-sense and become merely the spectator of the workings of nature. We have to detach ourselves from the body, the senses, the mind, and the ego-sense and watch the various activities which are taking place through them. We are free in the sense that we can hold ourselves apart from various outer and inner phenomena. Only detached souls can be free. Those who involve themselves in the workings of the body and mind, lose their freedom, though they wrongly regard themselves as free agents.

But the witnessing soul of the *Gītā* does not simply watch but also gives its assent to the action. The assent of the self or in other words, its approval is equally necessary for the action to be accomplished. The position, therefore, can be stated thus. According to the *Gītā* an action of whatever nature, is always performed by the modes of nature. When I raise my arm or speak a word, the whole process is through and through natural, but it would not take place unless the conscious self is also present. This may be said to introduce the element of freedom in what otherwise appears to be a completely deterministic view of human action. In other words, the witnessing consciousness besides being a spectator can also say

'Yes' or 'No' to an action under contemplation. Such an action, in which assent of the self has been given is different and on a higher plane than a merely impulsive action This is the only sense in which the word freedom can be used in relation to the teachings of *Bhagawad Gītā.* "The supreme spirit in the body (i. e. the real self apart from the ego) is called the spectator, the permitter, the sustainer, the experiencer, the great lord and the highest soul (XIII. 22). The soul is looked upon not only as a spectator and as one who gives the assent, but it is also said to take pleasure in its various experiences. "When the Lord of the body enters into a new body or leaves the old one, he takes with him the senses and the mind, as the wind carries the perfumes from their places. He enjoys the objects of the senses, using the eye. ear, skin, tongue, nose and also the mind" (XV. 8, 9). Thus the Puruṣa of the *Gītā* is not simply a seer or spectator like the Puruṣa of the *Sāṅkhya,* he also permits action to take place and takes pleasure in it.

The stand-point of the *Gītā* may be expressed in the following words of a writer on the ethical philosophy of Spinoza, "When we look at the world as a rational whole .... we reach a stand point beyond good and evil. Effects follow causes according to the unbreakable determinism of the Divine reason. Our happiness depends on how clearly we comprehend this necessity ; to fail to understand this is to think confusedly. Emotional or imaginative thinking is confused (inadequate) ; but rational thinking is clear.

The highest possible happiness is to attain cosmic consciousness, to be filled with elevated joy at the sublime spectacle of the unity of reality as an expression of immanent law."*

*Hector Hawton, *Philosophy for Pleasure* p. 46.

Chapter VI

The Ultimate Goal

The *Bhagawad Gītā* is really a treatise on practical religion. Philosophy is an intellectual effort to understand the real nature of the world; religion, on the other hand, aims at prescribing a method or discipline for achieving peace and harmony in life by overcoming all conflict and antagonism within oneself as well as in one's relation to the external world.

The teaching of *Gītā* is intended for those people who are above the average level of humanity. The common man is, more or less, satisfied with the conventional modes of living. He does not question them, and accepts their authority unhesitatingly. There are, however, some people of higher mental calibre in every community, who cannot find much satisfaction in conventional values and so remain, more or less, in a constant state of inner tension and conflict. Their sense of dissatisfaction leads them on in search of a remedy for the ills of life. The quest for religion, in the real sense of the word, takes its rise out of discontentment with the conventional values of life.

The *Gīta*, however, does not condemn conventional morality and religion. Though, at times, it speaks in disparagement of sacrificial religion which was in vogue in those times (IV. 33, II. 42-43, II. 46), it does, at the same time, recognize its value for those who believe in it. (III. 12, XVIII. 5-6). Though the word sacrifice (Yajña) in the *Bhagawad Gītā* has been given a very extended meaning, including in its scope, restaint of the senses, the practice of austerity, Meditation and pursuit of divine knowledge, yet the material sacrifices, too, have been given their due place. The author of the *Gīta*, however, makes it quite clear that in his opinion, sacrifice in the form of knowledge is superior to material sacrifice (IV. 33). Similarly, the worship of various gods and spirits, which was prevalent among the masses, is also countenanced in the *Gīta* (VII. 21-22, IX, 20-21). The idea seems to be that even the primitive form of religion has its use in so far as it takes a man out of himself.' As a writer puts it, some religion is better than no religion. This is the religion of the majority of mankind. They worship their gods with a view to obtain all good things of life from them. We find all about us people who are perfectly satisfied with this kind of religion. Nor do they question the moral values which have come down to them by way of tradition. Thousands of warriors had gathered at the Kurukṣetra battle-field, ready to kill and to be killed according to the traditional Dharma of Kṣtriyas. It never occured to them to doubt the validity of the

rules laid down by the Dharma-Śāstras for their benefit. But, here and there, we come across people who, like Arjuna in the *Gītā*, find no satisfaction in institutional religion and morality, and want to make an independent enquiry into the great truths of life. The teaching of the *Gītā* is mainly directed to meet the needs of such people.

While, in the past, some writers tried to make out that the *Gītā* was a philosophic treatise concerned with their favourite brand of idealism such as Dvaita, Advaita and so on, or that it was a treatise on Jñāna Yoga, Karma Yoga or Bhakti Yoga, or all the three taken together, some modern scholars try to interpret the doctrines of the *Gītā* as an essay in psychotherapy for the cure of neurotic and mental troubles. In a way it is true that religion aims at the removel of emotional dis-harmony. If we were emotionally well-integrated, we would not stand in need of religious discipline in any form. But psychotherapy deals with particular forms of emotional conflict the origin of which is, for the most part, in the unconscious layers of mind, and which incapacitate a person from giving unhindered expression to his energies in useful fields of daily activities. The psycho-analyst treats people who suffer from various kinds of neurotic disorders such as anxiety, neurasthenia, hysteria, depression, phobias, obsession etc. But for him the large majority of people who are engaged in normal activities, and take part in various occupations of life without any appreciable difficulty or inner inhibitions, are mentally

quite healthy people, and, as such, do not stand in need of any treatment. There are, however, very few persons among this large majority of so called healthy-minded people, who can say that they are completely happy or that they have no use for religion or any other method to bring greater happiness or contentment in there lives. Kings and statesmen, scientists and philosophers, great philanthropists and people who hold positions of eminence and importance in their community, not to speak of common men and women, one and all with very few exceptions if any, stand in need of some discipline or way of life which may make it possible for them to remain calm, tranquil and at peace with themselves while engaged in various pursuits of life. No psycho-analytic technique has been devised so far, which can bring to mankind the fulfilment of their universal need for abiding peace and happiness. Helen Puner, in her very instructive biography of Sigmund Freud the founder of Psycho-analysis, says that the theories of Freud "provide neither the comfort nor the solace that their discoverer no less than other men, needed......... He revealed humanity to itself, but he could not make it any happier than he could make himself" She says further ; "he had made only one basic mistake : he had believed that everything could be understood. He had insisted that the limited world of reason and reasonable actions was the one reality."*

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*Freud. Dell Edition p. 296-297.

What is Religion?

Religion has been defined in various ways. We have no intention to refer to the various definitions of religion. It can, however, be said that the underlying aim of every great religion is to bring about the enlargement of consciousness, by whatever name this idea may be expressed. *The idea of God* plays a very important part in most religions, and the common man is prone to regard Him as a distinct spiritual personality with infinitely great powers and attributes. He bows down before that invisible Being and hopes that as the result of his prayers and offerings, it would come to his help in his troubles and tribulations. But in higher religious thinking God stands for the cosmic whole or Universal spirit, and the efforts of a religious man are directed, by means of acts of worship or spiritual exercises, to emerge out of his narrow egoistic consciousness and realise his oneness with the Universal spirit or cosmic whole, with all the consequences which follow from it in practical life. The expression 'union with God' is to be understood in this sense. It implies transcending or getting over our sense of separateness and surrendering ourselves completely to the Divine whole. "So complex a nature has man that though it is certainly true that his strongest instinct is that of self-preservation, it is nevertheless equally true, that he has also within him the opposite instinct, the instinct to negate himself, a mad longing to escape from his cramping and confining ego in which he is, of necessity, for ever

imprisoned." The transcending of the ego may, in a sense, be regarded as the central purpose of religion, everything else being subsidiary to it. Not to speak of religion, we sometimes find the same instinct at work in the political sphere. When faith in religion declines, faith in the all-powerfulness of state and its leader takes its place. The individual feels an irresistible impulse to merge himself and his private interests in the universal good of the state. He intensely feels his oneness with the state and feels a joy in sacrificing and effacing himself completly so that the state may live and thrive. It it the same instinct to negate and transcend one's ego, operating in the political field.

The founders of all great religions passed through intense mystic experiences which gave them the highest satisfaction. It was the self-transcending experience at its best. The delight which they got out of it was unique and incomparable to anything else. This is the pure or original religion. The idea of God is an inference from the experience and not a part of the experience itself, Various have been the methods practised by the followers of religions for producing, in themselves, this mystic experience. From communal dancing and singing in the presence of gods and making all sorts of offerings and sacrifices, on the one hand, to the most highly developed forms of contemplation and meditation on the other, there is an abundance of methods and modes of worship and meditation found in the religious life of mankind.

It is, of course, true that various motives have gone into the weaving of the religious fabric. The worship of gods has not always being a disinterested one. People as a rule worship their gods and make offerings to them in the hope of obtaining material comforts of life and to be rid of evils and misfortunes. But it would be wrong to imagine, even in the case of primitive religions, that the sole motive of the worshippers was out-and-out material. At an early stage, man devised certain rituals and dances which, when collectively performed, gave a highly delightful experience to those who took part in them. It enabled them to forget themselves for the time being, and get the feeling of oneness with the collective whole. The experience brought exhilaration of spirit and joyfulness not to be obtained in any other way. In modern communities also, church and temple ceremonies, communal songs and prayers as well as individual acts of worship and meditation have a similar influence on the minds of religious devotees. A religion, if it is worth anything should be capable of communicating, by proper devices, the experience of oneness and the joy of self-transcendence, or something approaching this experience.

It is very difficult to say how belief in gods originated. We need not pause here to discuss the various theories advanced by a number of writers to account for the origin of gods. We need only point out that, in religion, belief in God or gods and other associated beliefs are a secondary affair. the central

core being the characteristic experience which goes with religious acts. There can be a religion without a belief in God or gods but there can be no religion without certain rites and exercises for producing the characteristic experience. There are other human activities at a higher level, which are a source of highly satisfying and unifying experiences. Scientific, philosophical, aesthetic, and moral activities bring keen satisfaction to those who are engaged in them. They are all non-egoistic activities and produce in their respective fields, the experience and joy of self-transcendence and at-one-ment; but even they cannot compare with the joy and peace experienced by mystics and advanced religious devotees. The religious experience vouch safes an intense and vivid feeling of unity and oneness not within a restricted field but with the cosmic whole. Its sweep is all-embracing and nothing is left out of its scope. The resulting feeling of blissfulness and rapture, as reported by mystics of all lands, surpasses immeasurably the joy and satisfaction obtained from aesthetic, moral and scientific activities. In religion self-transcendence reaches a state of completeness and perfection.

Many persons keep away from religion because they cannot bring themselves to believe in the existence of God, the immortality of soul and similar other beliefs. But this, as we have found, is not an essential part of religion. Early Buddhism is a case in point. The Buddha prescribed a way of salvation in which belief in God played no part whatsoever, and yet it

gave immense satisfaction to his followers, because through it they could attain to a blissful state of consciousness which, once attained and established in life, brought about its transformation. This seems to be the main function of religion in its primitive as well as advanced forms.

But the higher mystic consciousness besides being a blissful state, has also a noetic or knowing side. The yogī or the mystic in the actual experience of cosmic consciousness, not only feels but also knows. What he perceives or intuits in that condition, he tries to communicate to others. The various religious concepts and ideas arise out of the effort to convey to others what the mystic has experienced in his trance. In doing so he makes use of symbols and ideas which are already known to him.

A more or less similar process takes place in the perception of physical objects and things. The original undifferentiated sensuous experience of a person in his infancy is, in course of time, interpreted as representing an external reality consisting of separate objects and persons. There is presumably no distinction between subject and object or between one object and another in the original sensuous experience. It is a later construction imposed upon the 'the big blooming buzzing confusion' provided to a new-born babe by his senses. Similarly, the original trance experience of a mystic may have no distinctions within it, but it is later interpreted as implying an Infinite divine spirit which contains, in its bosom, all phenomenal

existences. The mystic is as sure of God or the Divine spirit as the ordinary man is sure of the existence of the external world of men and things. Both beliefs arise out of an original difference-less mass of experience. The mystics of all countries seem to accept one or other of the various theories of life and reality current in their times according to their own tastes and predilections. Such differences in religious views have always been there, but the starting point of almost all of them is the same, namely the experience of an enlarged consciousness. If this fact is clearly grasped, there would be no cause for ill feeling or antagonism between one religion or another.

The state of enlarged cosmic consciousness is called by various names such as Mokṣha, Nirvāṇa, Salvation etc. In each case it is a state of emancipation from egoistic consciousness. The Buddha spoke of it as Bodhi or enlightenment involving a qualitative change in consciousness.

The impulse to worship the Divine also arises out of a desire to bring oneself close to and, ultimately, to merge oneself into the infinite whole as the river merges into the sea. The individual no longer feels alone. He is safe and experiences a feeling of warmth and intimacy in his attitude of worship and surrender to the Supreme being. There is no conflict between the tendency to identify oneself with the Supreme and the desire to worship the Supreme. The act of worship is essential as long as the ego persists, in order to enable an individual to transcend his narrow self

and acquire a feeling of kinship with the Supreme being or the cosmic whole.

Some persons are born with a natural predilection for cosmic experience. They are persons with a mystical turn of mind. Generally such persons manifest, at a very early age, a tendency towards abstraction from their surroundings, and losing themselves, now and then, in the oneness of Being. The result of these occasional excursions into a trance-like condition is that their egoism becomes thin and harmless. Their every-day activities bear on them the influence of the mystic current set going in their lives. In India, we have instances of men like Rāmakṛṣṇa Parmahansa, Ramana Mahārṣi and others who began to have mystic experiences from a very early life. We have similar accounts of mystic revelations in other countries.

The underlying idea of religious quest is to re-unite ourselves with the whole from which we have cut ourselves off with the dawning of self-consciousness. At the self-conscious stage, man has made a wonderful progress in science, technology and in the creation of various moral, economic and social systems. But at this stage the human being remains isolated from the whole of which he forms a part. He may intellectually conceive his oneness with the rest of the Universe, but in action and feeling he remains an isolated being. Of course, now and then, in family relations of love and affection, in acts of friendship and benevolence, or in scientific and artistic pursuits,

he transcends his self and has a taste of something greater than himself. Religion aims at making this condition a habitual and dominant state of our consciousness.

Jacob Boehme, a great German mystic says, "that it is self-thinking and self-willing which keeps us from the vision of God-consciousness. Nothing truly but thine own willing, hearing and seeing do keep thee back from it, and do hinder thee from coming to this super-sensuous stage. And it is because thou strivest so, against that out of which thou thyself art descended and derived, that thou thus breakest thyself off, with thine own willing, from God's willing, and thy own seeing from God's seeing." He says again, "when thou standest still from the thinking of self and the willing of self when both the intellect and will are quiet and passive to the impressions of the eternal world and spirit... then the eternal hearing, seeing, and speaking will be revealed to thee......blessed art thou, therefore, if thou canst stand still from self-thinking and self-willing, and canst stop the wheel of thy imagination and senses ; for as much as hereby thou mayest arrive at length to see the great salvation of God, being made capable of all manner of divine sensations and heavenly communications." In other words, it is only when an individual transcends the narrow bonds of his self and sees his self as the self of all, that he attains full enlightenment accompanied by a state of unbounded peace, joy and blessedness. It is not a matter or

mere intellectual conviction but a direct realisation of the unity of all things in a universal self.

Paramahaṅsa Rām Kṛṣṇa speaks of his God-vision as follows :—

"Do you know what I see right now ? I see that it is God himself who has become all this. It seems to me that men and other living beings are made of skin, and that it is God himself who dwelling inside these skin cases, moves the hands, the feet, the heads. I had a similar vision once before, when I saw houses, gardens, roads, men, cattle and all, made of one substance. It was as if they were all made of wax." Formal worship drops away after the vision of God. "It was thus that my worship in the temple came to an end......It was suddenly revealed to me that every thing is from spirit. The utensils, the worship, the odour, the door-frame are all pure spirit. Men, animals, and other living beings all are pure spirit. Then like a mad man I began to shower flowers in all directions. Whatever I saw, I worshipped."

Underlying Assumption of Religion

Religion, in its highest expression, takes the form of mysticism, and mysticism, whether it is Hindu, Christian, Muslim or any other, is based on the experience of an all-pervading or cosmic consciousness. In the case of a mystic, spiritual unity is not inferred but directly sensed and felt. All manifestations are comprised in this one-ness. They are realized as emanating from the whole, just as all parts of a tree, the

trunk, the branches, the leaves and flowers spring out of a common root and derive their life from it. For the leaf to imagine itself as self-subsistent and separate from the life of the whole is stark ignorance.

The universe, inspite of all its multiplicities is really a universe or a unified whole. The God—vision of which we read in the eleventh chapter of '*Bhagawad Gītā*' consists in an immediate and direct awareness of one-ness, pervading all existences. They are all inter-connected with one another and derive their life from the same underlying reality.

This idea is expressed by C.E.M. Joad as follows; "The characteristic feature of knowledge in the ordinary sense of the term, when we use it to describe the knowledge of the things of this world, is that the knower is separate from what is known. If I know that I hold a pen and sit at a desk, my knowledge does not make me one with the pen or the desk......But the knowledge that is religious knowledge just because it is more than knowledge, leaps across the gulf which separates knower from known, so that in the last resort when the soul truly knows God, the soul ceases to be separate from God, ceases, that is to say, to be individual and becomes one with what is known. This condition of one-ness can be achieved, while the soul is still in the flesh, in the mystic vision, when the soul realises its one-ness with the God it knows and loves; it may also be achieved, and permanently achieved, after death, since it is, in part, the body which separates the soul from God."

In mysticism the one is realized as universal self or universal consciousness, manifesting itself in multitudinous forms. The difference between mysticism and naturalism is that while the latter regards the ultimate reality as material or something equivalent to it, the former looks upon it as spiritual or to put it more concretely, as a conscious existence; not an inert but a living conscious reality. This is what is meant by the term universal consciousness or universal self. Out of it arise, in an inexplicable way, whatever of existences-living and non-living—are met with in the world, and into which they may be reabsorbed on the termination of the world process; the cycle repeating itself endlessly.

According to mysticism, it is not only good and beautiful things which derive their existence from the ultimate spirit, but all things, good and bad, beautiful and ugly, have the same origin. As a writer puts it, "true mysticism is beyond good and evil, and the mysticism which seeks to persuade itself or others that the One is good, is a false mysticism. Mysticism does not seek to impose its personal terms upon the One. The One is not what we like, but to which we and our likings belong. We can not bargain with it or propose conditions; and the true mystic has no desire to do so". He says further on, "mysticism by whatever path it is attained, demands the stripping off of our personalities from ourselves. We surrender them, it is true, only to receive them again. But the personality we receive again is not the personality we

surrendered. It is no longer we who like or think or do, but the One, who likes or thinks or does in us. And this impersonal personality we receive, does not resemble the personal personality we surrendered. It is a new birth".* As we shall see later the *Bhagawad Gītā* accepts this assumption of mystic religion, and bases its practical discipline for spiritual realization or its "Sādhanā" on this assumption.

The Goal of Life According to the Gītā

The goal of spiritual endeavour, according to the author of *Bhagawad Gītā,* is to liberate the individual from inner tensions and conscious and unconscious conflicts so that his whole energy is set free for complete spiritual living. Great men like, Janak, Rām and Kṛṣṇa besides many others, present to us illustrations of complete spiritual living. All aspects of their life-intellectual, artistic, moral and religious-were developed to harmonious perfection. They lived in the world and performed all duties pertaining to their station in life, and yet they remained free, non-attached and in tune with the divine.

The conception of the subconscious in the *Gītā* is much broader than what is generally understood in modern psychology. It includes divine qualities also, which an individual, as a spark of the divine, brings with him at his birth. (Chapter XVI. 1 & 2). The divine qualities are to be made dominant, so that they may ultimately annex to themselves the energy of unwholesome conscious or unconscious

*John Middleton Murry, The *Aryan Path.* May 1, 1957.

tendencies. The finite individual is thus to be completely transformed so that he loses his finitude and ego-hood and unites himself with the universal consciousness to which he ultimately belongs.

The condition that arises out of the loss of one's finitude is described in various ways in the *Bhagawad Gītā*. "He who is happy himself and is illumined by the inner light, such a Yogi becoming one with Brahman, attains Brahmic consciousness (V. 24). In IV-10 again, it is stated that those who are completely rid of passion, fear and anger and are purified by the constant pursuit of wisdom, ultimately become one with the Supreme Brahman, and in XIV. 27 the Supreme is stated as the abode of the imperishable Brahman, of immortality, of ever-lasting goodness and of un-ending bliss.

The state of union with Brahman, described in the above verses is another name for enlarged or cosmic consciousness to which we have referred above. This conception is most vividly brought before us in chapter XI of the *Bhagawad Gītā*. Arjuna, with the spiritual help of the Master goes into a state of trance and for a few moments, sees the one-ness of the universe in a concrete form. All objects and existences of the universe stand before him as organic to one divine whole. All events, births and deaths of individuals, movements of the sun and the stars, and the cyclic occurrence of natural phenomena appear before his astonished eyes as happening in the same eternal divine being. It was a terrifying

spectacle and Arjuna could not stand the strain of this concentrated vision for long, and so he beseeches his teacher to bring him back to normal mode of perception. The synthetic vision as described in Chapter XI may be imagined to be like that of a leaf seeing itself, in a flash, as a part of the tree to which it belongs. The ego-view consists in each individual regarding himself as separate from the others. This view, in the language of religion, is a false view born out of Avidyā or ignorance. Religion aims at restoring the right view of things. The religious consciousness is defined by Prof. Bosanquet as 'self-recognition', the recognition by the finite of its true being and of its union with the whole, an insight into 'the impossibility of its finding peace otherwise than as offering itself to the whole'. The primary principle of religion is said to be found in "devotion and worship, such that in them the self not merely passes beyond itself, but consciously and intentionally rejects itself as worthless because of the supreme value which it attaches to the object with which it desires and affirms its union."*

The synthetic or God-vision is not only a gain in knowledge, it also brings about a complete transformation in the daily behaviour of an individual. We have in chapter XII of the *Bhagawad Gītā,* an enumeration of the qualities which are to be found in a God-intoxicated person *i.e.* one whose consciousness has overflown the boundaries of his ego and has entered into union with the infinite consciousness.

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*Pringle Pattison. *The idea of God.* Page 290.

Such a person is friendly and compassionate towards all beings and is free from egoism and the spirit of possessiveness. To him, pain and pleasure are alike ; he is the same in honour and dishonour, in praise and censure, heat and cold, and the same to friend and foe. He is ever-content, pure, forgiving and completely dedicated to the divine. He is free from all emotional perturbations and he craves for nothing. He has no feeling of doership in his undertakings and he always remains above distractions and attachments.

William James says, in his great book "*The varieties of religious experiences*" that the test of religion lies in its effect on the life of an individual. Whatever be the source of the mystic impulse in man, if it elevates and purifies his life, it stands justified in the light of reason. The liberated person of the *Gītā* is endowed with divine qualities and he uses his talents and powers of mind and body for the disinterested service of mankind. He does not renounce the world to become a recluse. He performs whatever work falls to his share, with earnestness though without attachment to the consequences which follow, and without anger and fear. Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the teacher of the *Bhagawad Gītā* differs from the Buddha who taught the doctrine of renunciation and homelessness. His arhats or men of perfection were not expected to take part in the life of the community except that of teaching the noble doctrine of the master. The perfect man of the *Gīta*, on the other hand, while he possesses in abundance, the divine qualities of the God-realized,

various levels of evolution. As an individual in his concreteness in a part of this manifested whole, he has to realize his oneness with it. He has to recapture the unity which has somehow been lost by the development of ego-consciousness. The reality in me has to connect itself with the reality pervading all other manifestations. Yoga is a method which aims at the restoration of this lost unity. The various phrases such as union with Brahman, merging one's ego in the Universal spirit, 'spiritual enlightenment', 'salvation', 'Mokṣa', 'Brāhmī Sthiti' etc. all imply the same thing.

Yoga is the practical aspect of religion. While every religion has its philosophy, its main function is to point out the path to spiritual harmony. Without Yoga, religion is simply a conglomeration of uninspiring dogmas. People resort to religion,-at least the enlightened members of humanity—with the practical aim of achieving mental harmony and peace. Intellectual understanding of the nature of ultimate reality plays a subordinate role in religious life and is mainly the concern of philosophy.

Institutional religion provides all sorts of devices, from the worship of idols to the chanting of prayers and hymns along with the performance of various rituals, penances and acts of piety such as going on pilgrimages, fasting, distribution of alms and so on. At a certain level of mental evolution, these devices do have a soothing effect on the mind of man and help him to escape, for the time being, from the

narrow bounds of the ego and make his connection, however precarious, with the invisible power in which he moves and has his being.

In the old vedic times, the method of worship consisted of simple prayers addressed to the Divine, accompanied by the performance of Yajña (sacrifice) as a symbol of self-consecration. This simple method, later on *in Brāhmaṇic times*, degenerated into the religion of costly sacrifices which did good to no-body except to the performing priests. Attached to the ritualistic literature of the *Brāhmaṇas*, we find a number of religious texts, known as the *Upaniṣads*, which by-pass the sacrificial ritual and prescribe meditation on the infinite eternal changeless "Brahman" as the method of spiritual illumination.

The spiritual discipline of the *Upaniṣads* which, later on, came to be known as Jñāna Mārga or the path of knowledge, consisted in the thorough study of *Upaniṣadic* texts under the guidance of a competent teacher (Śravaṇa) accompanied by deep reflection on those texts (Manana). The step of manana was essential in order to develop complete faith in the teaching of the *Upaniṣads*. The third step, known as Nididhyāsana or Dhyāna consisted in yogic meditation on some abbreviated *Upaniṣadic* text such as 'Tat Sat', 'Aham Brahma Asmi', 'Idam khalu Brahma' or merely on the one-syllabled 'OM'. The disciple was not to question the truths of the *Upaniṣads*. The logical reflection was meant to produce a deep intellectual conviction, in the mind of the disciple, about truths

initially accepted as an act of faith. But intellectual conviction was still far from spiritual realization. Dhyāna or Nidi-dhyāsana was meant to cover the gap and convert a mere intellectual belief into direct intuitive experience.

These exercises are to be accompanied by the cultivation of certain mental and moral qualities. 'Vairāgaya' or a state of non-attachment to the things of the world was regarded as a very important quality to be cultivated. Deep concentration which was needed for spiritual intuition could not be practiced if there remained in the mind of the aspirant, even a trace of attachment to any object of the world. 'Vairāgaya' should be the natural outcome of the realization that worldly desires cannot give any lasting satisfaction and always end in disillusionment. It is only the intuitive realization of the divine which gives abiding happiness. This is known as a state of viveka or discrimination. Along with these, the disciple was required to cherish a deep aspiration for spiritual illumination and to cultivate certain moral qualities such as Śama (control of mind), Dama (control of sensual desires), Uparati (renunciation of worldly life) Titikṣā (endurance of unpleasant experiences) and Śraddhā (faith in the word of the teacher).

Later on, the Buddha taught the eight-fold path of spiritual realization. He laid emphasis on the cultivation of moral virtues and the practice of meditation resulting in the attainment of wisdom, or spiritual enlightenment. In its original

form it gave solace to innumerable spiritual aspirants who did not very much care for religious dogmas, ceremonies and rituals.

The *Bhagawad Gītā* prescribes the following steps for attaining spiritual harmony and peace.

(i) Realization of the distinction between self and not-self.

(ii) Seeing God every where in all beings, happenings, and events.

(iii) The cultivation of moral qualities and purity in thought, speech and action.

(iv) Concentration and meditation.

(v) Disinterested performance of action.

(vi) Devotion and complete self-surrender to the divine.

There is much that is common between the *Gītā's* way of spiritual realization and the way of the *Upaniṣads* the *Pātañjal Yoga*, or that of the Buddha. The cultivation of moral qualities, discrimination of self from not-self and meditation exercises are almost the same in all the systems. But the way of the *Bhagawad Gītā* has certain distinctive features of its own. The addition of the elements of dis-interested action and devotion have very much increased its spiritual appeal to persons of varied religious temperament.

It will be apparent from a close study of the various element of spiritual discipline, that the path of attaining spiritual harmony is not a simple one. It

involves complete transformation of a human being and an attempt to re-educate all aspects of life ; bodily, volitional, emotional and cognitive. All these steps, therefore, constitute a whole to be simultaneously taken up as inseparable parts of one sweeping self-originated movement for spiritual evolution.

These steps are related to the philosophical conceptions which were explained at some length, in the previous part. It will be useful to have a clear idea of them in order to intelligently follow the course of spiritual discipline taught by the author of the *Bhagawad Gītā*.

We shall add here that religious practice presupposes a healthy body. Religious exercises can not make up for lack of physical health and vitality. Even the lives of some great religious teachers were cut short on account of physical ill-health. Paramahaṅsa Rāma Kṛṣṇa died of throat cancer at the age of fifty ; Swāmi Vivekānand died at 39 years of age on account of diabetes, and the same can be said of some other great yogis. A spiritual aspirant, therefore, should keep up his health by regular exercise, proper diet, breathing exercises and similar other means. The author of the *Gītā*, lays stress, in chapter VI, on the need of moderate living in respect of diet, sleep etc. for a person who wants to pursue yoga for spiritual enlightenment. We specially want to stress this point here as we are not going to write any more on this subject in the remaining part of the book.

We shall now take up the various elements one by one.

Chapter II

Discrimination between self and not-self

As we already know, the author of the *Gītā* differentiates between Jīva and prakṛti or self and not-self. The body, the senses, the mind, the intellect and even the ego belong to the category of not-self ; consciousness alone being the self.

The first thing that the spiritual disciple has to do is to clearly envisage the distinction between the self and the not-self. Kṛṣṇa begins his teaching to Arjuna with the exposition of this distinction. While the body like other physical objects, is liable to decay and death, soul is immortal and is not subject to death." "The soul is never born, nor does it ever die ; nor having once come to be, does it again cease to be. It is unborn, eternal, indestructible and ancient. It is not destroyed when the body is destroyed." (II. 20).

The idea of the soul being different from the body is dwelt upon so often in the *Gītā* that no doubt is left in the mind of the reader about the real intent of the author. When a person dies, the soul in him does not die ; it simply migrates to another body and this

process goes on till it is completely purified of all taints and attains salvation. "Just as a person, having discarded old raiments, puts on new ones, similarly the embodied soul discards the old body and assumes a now one." (II 22).

When the word jñāna or knowledge is used in the *Gītā*, one meaning of it consists in clearly distinguishing the self from the not-self, the other meaning being to see and realize the presence of the Supreme being (Brahman) in all persons, objects and happenings. This is real or life-saving knowledge, all other knowledge being merely empirical or secular, that is, concerned with physical mental or social phenomena. The latter type of knowledge falls within the sphere of various sciences. It has its own importance, revealing as it does, the inner workings of nature and mind. It lends itself to various practical applications. With the help of this knowledge human beings can harness the forces of nature and make them work for the physical well-being of mankind. These physical or material needs form the base of the great human adventure. Till these needs find satisfaction on a universal scale, the inner energies of mankind can not be released completely for spiritual end. We can pursue the spiritual objective of life if we succeed in forgetting the body and its material surroundings and this is, in most cases, possible only when the primary and essential needs of the body have been properly satisfied. Excessive want or excessive self-pampering are both harmful to the calm, undisturbed and beneficent release of human energies.

Apart from the knowledge provided by the physical and mental sciences, there is philosophical knowledge which aims at attaining a synthetic view of reality as a whole. It utilizes for this purpose, the material provided by the sciences. Philosophy, in the nature of the case, can not offer universally acceptable conclusions. It presents various pictures of the world according to the temperamental variations in the philosophical thinkers. But it does satisfy the craving of a civilized man for a unified or synoptic view of the world, each individual adopting any one of the various types of philosophy according to his own predilection. These types are not many in number. In all highly developed countries, a few more or less similar patterns of philosophical thinking have evolved and they answer to the needs of philosophical enquiry in human beings. These ideas keep on being reinterpreted according to the changing needs of the times.

Philosophical knowledge is mostly the result of intellectual effort. Religion aims at transforming this knowledge into a concrete realization. This can be done, in the first place, by the constant study of books dealing with these subjects or listening to discourses from wise persons, followed by a thorough-going reflection on these ideas. Then follows the stage of constant dwelling on and contemplation of those ideas. One of those ideas to which the *Gītā* makes a prominent reference, and which forms one of its basic postulates, so to speak, is the idea ofthe

distinction between the eternal self and the constantly changing body. This distinction is not simply to be intellectually grasped; it is to be completely realized so that it becomes a part and parcel of one's spiritual make-up.

For this concrete realization, a person has to repeat to himself every day that he is not the body, nor even the mind in its various forms. He is to remind himself daily at fixed periods of contemplation, that the body from the toe of the foot to the top of the head is made up of bones, flesh, blood, marrow and other tissues which are all without any trace of consciousness. Each part of the body, whether it is the heart, stomach or the brain, is made of dead lifeless material particles and yet man is a conscious living being. This consciousness is unique and though it appears with the body, it cannot be regarded as in any way belonging to the body. We cannot imagine it as located in the heart, brain or any other part of the body. We have to deeply realise that consciousness is the reality or self in the embodied person, all else being not-self. The sense experiences of form, sound, smell, taste and touch, the thoughts and images that flit across one's mind, and various feelings and desires, in short, all mental contents are to be looked upon as separate from self or consciousness. Just as pictures appear and disappear on the screen in a cinematographic show, the various mental states, similarly, appear and disappear on the screen of consciousness. While these pictures come and go,

the underlying consciousness remains constant. Even in the condition of deep sleep it cannot be said that consciousness is destroyed altogether. We can not say that it becomes extinct when we go to sleep and that a new consciousness appears when we wake up again. As a matter of fact, on getting awake we feel that we are the same person as the one who had gone to sleep. After a more or less prolonged period of daily practice, it becomes possible to empty the mind of all contents and to experience a state of peace and tranquillty. The daily practice of discriminating the self from the passing mental content, results in giving rise to a calm and quiet state of mind. It prevents us from getting emotionally involved in our various experiences. Even when engaged in a most important task, we shall be able to maintain our inner peace and objectivity. The more our practice advances, the greater will be our control on vagrant ideas, enabling us thereby to concentrate our energy only on those matters to which we choose to attend.

In the great task of spiritual integration, the acquirement of a state of inner peace and detachment from invading thoughts is the first important step, the foundation on which the rest of spiritual structure can be built. Though it is very difficult to attain complete control over one's thoughts, yet it can be done. "All developed mental men," Says Shri Aurobindo "those who go beyond the average, have in one way or the other or at least, at certain times or for certain purposes, to separate the two parts of the mind, the

active part which is a factory of thoughts and the quiet masterful part which atonce is a witness and a will, observing them, judging, rejecting, eliminating, accepting, ordering, correcting and changing; the master in the house of mind, capable of self-empire; '*Sāmrājya*'."

As the practice develops still further, it becomes possible to put one self in the position of a 'Sākṣhī' or witness, who sees thoughts as if coming to him from outside and as being no longer a part of him. When this state is reached, the soul becomes the conscious master of its domain. As the *Gītā* says, "the senses are great. Greater than the senses is the mind. Even greater than the mind is reason (Buddhi). But the greatest of all is He (the in-dwelling Ātman). Knowing him (Ātman) thus as beyond even the 'buddhi', steadying the lower self by the higher self, destroy, O mighty-armed Arjuna, the great enemy in the form of desire which is so hard to conquer". (III. 42-43).

If the Ātman is conscious of itself as the master, and can maintain this consciousness throughout, it can easily control the mind and the senses.

In the doctrine of the Buddha, the habit of keeping a constant watch, in a detached manner, over one's movements, passions, and thoughts is known as mindfulness. (Saṁyak Smṛti). The self loses its mastery over its realm only when it forgets its privileged position as the master of the show and

instead of constantly remembering itself as such, allows itself to be idendified with the body and the mind.

This then is the first element in the spiritual discipline of the *Bhagawad Gītā*. One is to intensely feel that he is the self or the observer and as such apart from the observed *i.e.* the body, the mind and the external objects. When calamities befall us or physical ailments imperil the body or impure thoughts arise in the mind, even then we are to maintain the attitude of an observer or a witness and refuse to be overwhelmed by them. The most immediate effect of this practice, as already stated, is that we can remain calm and undisturbed in the midst of distresses and turmoils and feel ourselves as the master of the situation instead of being over-powered by it. This process of self-discrimination is an important mode of impartially looking at one's own actions, emotions and thoughts, and accepting them or rejecting them, according as they are proper or improper. When anger or any other undesirable emotion or desire arises in us, we should be able to dissociate ourselves from it and refuse to be overpowered and confused by it. It is a very effective means of acquiring self mastery and purity of mind. There is also developed in us the attitude of non-attachment to pleasant and un-pleasant experiences as well as to the various things of the world. The quality of non-attachment is essential for the Godward movement of the soul.

After having achieved the impartial attitude of a

spectator in respect of various events and happenings of life, the next step is to realize our oneness and intimate connection with the universe as a whole, by seeing the same universal life pulsating through all beings, events and happenings. The *Sāṅkhya* spiritual discipline is limited to the process of discriminating the self from the not-self, but the *Bhagawad Gītā* wants us to go further and realize all beings, living as well as non-living, as emanating from the same Supreme soul. We are to see the same self in all beings, and all beings in the same self.

Chapter III

Realization of Oneness with the Supreme, or seeing God Everywhere

AFTER having realized the separateness of the self from the not-self, the next step is to experience one's unity with the supreme reality as manifested in animate and in-animate nature. The embodied Jīva forgets its divine status and gets involved in the shackles of Prakṛti or nature. It develops ego consciousness i.e. the consciousness of being separate from the rest of being. This is a false conception and it leads to all sorts of undesirable consequences. The main problem of religion is to help a person to reconnect himself with the whole or in other words to develop what is called cosmic consciousness i.e. an intimate feeling of oneness with the whole. Most of the evils of life are due to egoism run wild. Under its influence, all sorts of political, social and family disharmonies and discords take their rise, and when it assumes a most serious form, it becomes the cause of devastation and destruction all around. The sufferings of individuals, in most cases, are due to the operation of the egoistic tendencies of the mind.

We are not separate from one another. Each one of us is organically a part of the whole. The relation between the part and the organic whole is of a peculiar nature. Not only does the part dwell in the whole, the whole also dwells in the part. We are united with one another, by participating in the common life of the whole, which runs through all of us.

The *Gītā* is a *Yoga Śāstra*, "but the yoga here spoken of is not the yoga of Pātañjli or yoga in any technical sense, but it indicates union with the Divine or what the *Gītā* mentions as Brahmic consciousness, that resting and living in the Divine, in the Absolute, which is the sum and substance of spiritual realization. The 'Yukta', the 'Bhakta', the 'Sthita-Prajña', the 'Guṇātīta' all imply a resting in and union with the divine, and these are the ideals which '*Gītā*' wants us to realize."*

In the *Gītā*, God is the substratum of all existing things. No object can have an independent existence apart from Him. He is both immanent as well as transcendent. Though one, he has from beginingless time, manifested Himself in many forms by his own will.

Jīva and Prakṛti are eternally contained in his substance and both are without any beginning (XIII. 19). He is the reality in all embodied souls. "Know me, O

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*N. K. Brahma, *Philosophy of Hindu Sadhanā*, page 295.

Bhārata, as the Knower (Kṣetrajña) in all the bodies." (XIII. 2).

Both the teacher and the disciple, in the *Gītā*, have implicit faith in God. Nowhere, has any doubt been raised in regard to the existence of God. It is, on the other hand, regarded as essential that the seeker of spiritual knowledge should have a firm faith in the spiritual basis of the world in which he lives. The author of the *Gītā* uses very harsh words for persons, who have no belief in the existence of God. Those persons who think that the world is unreal, without a support, and without a Lord and that it is produced by union (of male and female) caused by lust and by nothing else, are characterised as demonaic. "Holding these views, these men of low understanding and of ferocious actions are born for the destruction of the world. Cherishing insatiable desire, full of vanity, hypocricy and ostentatiousness, they adopt false views and act with unholy resolve" (XVI. 8-9).

Faith is a very important factor in the life of man. When men are inspired by faith, they become capable of doing great things. Man is what faith makes of him (XVII, 3). Persons, however, differ in the objects of their faith. Some people place their faith in righteous living, others in worldly ambition. Some believe in the ideal of personal welfare, others devote themselves to the good of their country and their fellow men. People, as a rule, worship particular

deities for the realization of their various aims. Their objects of faith thus differ from one another.

There can be no social living, unless we have faith in each other's sense of decency. Scientific thinking pre-supposes faith in the uniform behaviour of nature. Unless we believed that "the book of nature is really a book and not a magazine," there could be no science and no organised thought. Faith plays an equally important part in religion. Just as a student of science starts his scientific career with implicit faith in the authority of qualified masters of science, till he is in a position to test the truth of their theories himself, a religious disciple, similarly, starts with faith in the words of his master, treads the spiritual path as directed by him, till finally he realizes, by his own experience, the truth of what he had taken on trust. What was formerly a mere hypothesis as it were, becomes an established truth as a consequence of personal testing, but the master, if he is worth anything would not insist on blind obedience on the part of the disciple. He would suggest to him whatever could provide a reasoned basis for this faith. He would make use of arguments, as far as arguments can go in support of the belief. We find for instance, law and order in the universe. Could it be a mere matter of chance ? Can a world of law and order arise out of a previous state of lawlessness and disorder ? We also find in the world an evolutionary urge towards higher and higher forms, such as space-time, matter, life, consciousness, appearing one after

the other. Does it not point to the fact of initial purpose and direction rather than to the play of blind natural forces? Every thing in the world is phenomenal and transient. Should not there be a bed-rock of reality as a basis for the passing phenomena of animate and inanimate nature. If there is a reality behind the appearances, is it more likely to be material or spiritual? And so on. Some persons do not stand in need of argument; their faith is already profound. But there are others who have an intellectual bent of mind and are likely to find all sorts of doubts and questionings arising in their minds. The wise teacher would not curb their curiosity and their desire to understand. He would answer their questions and suggest to them readings from religious scriptures. In India the study of *Upaniṣads*, the *Gītā* and other similar literature is generally recommended. The study is to be accompanied by reflection.

But the most important source of religious faith is the testimony provided by the mystics and saints of all lands, in support of spiritual truths. A student of religion can not afford to miss the study of the lives of great mystics, eastern and western. He would thereby get a new insight into the nature of religion. In recent years, the psychology of mysticism has been widely studied. No doubt is left, after a careful appraisal of the results of this study, that the mystic experience is a genuine phenomenon. The experience may not last beyond a few minutes, but much is known

during this short interval, which can never be otherwise known.

"The person" writes Doctor Buck in his great book '*Cosmic Consciousness*' "who passes through the experience, will learn in the few minutes or even moments of its continuance, more than in months, than in years of study, and he will learn much that no study ever taught or can teach. Especially, does he obtain such a conception of the whole, ... as dwarfs all conception, such a conception as makes the old attempts to mentally grasp the universe and its meaning petty and even ridiculous."

The same idea is reiterated by Jacob Boheme, a famous German mystic of the 17th century. While speaking of his own spiritual experience he says, "the gate was opened to me so that in one quarter of an hour I saw and knew more than if I had been many years at a University."

Anneth Walker in his book "*the diagnosis of man*" refers to a letter which plotinus, the great Greek mystic of as early as the second century B.C. wrote to a friend. A part of the letter is as follows :—
"You ask how we can know the infinite. I answer, not by reason. It is the office of reason to distinguish and define The infinite, therefore, can not be ranked among its objects. You can only apprehend the infinite by a faculty superior to reason, by entering into a state in which you are your finite self no longer, in which the Divine Essence is communicated to you.

This is ecstasy. It is the liberation of your mind from its finite consciousness .... But this sublime condition is not of permanent duration. It is only now and then that we can enjoy this elevation (mercifully made possible for us) above the limits of the body and the world. I myself have realized it but three times as yet" (Page 164). These expereinces are of a short duration but they leave their effects permanently on the life of the person who has them.

The mystics have had personal experience of the Divine or cosmic consciousness. The surprising fact is that their utterances are of a similar nature, whether they emanate from the mystics of the East or of the West, separated from one another by long distances of time and space. An extensive study of the lives and writings of these mystics and saints is most likely to create a basis of faith in the mind of a spiritual disciple.

Even the study of science, if made from a proper point of view, can contribute to the growth of faith in the Divine order of things. One need not abandon the pursuit of science or of art, in his desire to get at the spiritual root of things. The scientist in his particular field of study, comes across so many instances of rationality and order in even trivial happenings, that if he were not otherwise biassed in his outlook, he should, like a man of religion, feel overwhelmed by the indwelling urge which makes for order and intelligibility every where, as well as for the emergence of higher and higher forms and grades of existence in the

world. Science tells us that matter throughout the universe is nothing but energy appearing in various forms. In Indian philosophy it is called Prakṛti or Śakti. Besides Prakṛti we also find, Jīva or consciousness conjoined to various physical bodies. Thought finds itself unable to resolve one into the other. Prakṛti or Energy without consciousness would never be known as such. It would be practically equivalent to non-existence. Its being and non-being would amount to the same thing. Its drama would for ever remain unknown and unwitnessed. On the other hand, consciousness without Prakṛti would have no object to be conscious of. It would be empty of all contents, and, as such, it would not know even its own existence. Subject and object, Prakṛti and Puruṣa imply each other. They are interdependent. In the *Gītā*, they are spoken of as the two eternal aspects or nature of God ; matter being the lower nature and consciousness, the higher nature. Both find their raison-dtre in their connection with the Highest being. There is nothing in science which may be said to be destructive of our belief in the spiritual basis of the universe.

Various actions take place through us. We regard ourselves as the doers of those actions. According to the *Gītā*, however, "all actions are done by the qualities of nature ; the person whose mind is bewildered by egoism regards himself as their doer" (III. 27). Our actions proceed from our nature i.e. from the kind of person that we are. Our nature is

determined by our heredity and the social and physical influences which begin to work upon us from infancy onwards. The truth, according to the *Gītā*, is that the ultimate Supreme reality is using all of us as instruments for the realisation of its purposes. It is the sense of ego which creates the idea of doership. Under the influence of that ego which is itself the product of Prakṛti, each one of us thinks that he chooses and determines and is responsible for what he does. The ego is to be understood in its right perspective before we can consecrate all our actions to the Supreme self. We may not be able to eliminate the ego altogether. Our normal existence cannot be possible without its presence. But, in the words of Paramahańsa Rāma Kṛṣṇa, we can make it so thin and transparent that it will not shut us off from reality, as it ordinarily does. There can be no union with God as long as separateness or ego-sense holds the field.

It is wrong to suppose, as many people do, that casting off the idea of doership would make people irresponsible and inclined to all sorts of wicked actions or that it would make them inactive and listless, averse to taking part in the activities of social life. Evil-doing always arises from a hightened sense of egoism and selfishness. A person can ascend to the stage of non-doership only after he has made himself, through constant moral effort, free from ignoble and selfish inclinations. Nor would such a person become inactive. We are so made that we cannot but act. In this case, the action would take a non-egoistic form,

called into being not by any selfish desire but by the logic of the situation itself.

When we succeed in shedding off the coils of the ego, we feel that the Supreme being is the reality behind our egos. To Him belongs whatever we have been, through our ignorance, calling our own. Every thing in and of us belongs to God. Our bodies, our minds, our actions and all our so-called possessions, all are His. It is the supreme will that acts through our individual nature. There is the eternal Divine will, omniscient and omnipotent that expresses itself through the actions of "these apparently temporal and finite inconscient or half-conscient things". This is the Power or Presence implied by the *Gītā* when it speaks of the Lord within the heart of all beings, turning all creatures by the power of His Māyā, as if they were mounted on a machine (XVIII. 61). Of course, this realization cannot be accomplished all atonce. It involves the conquest of our lower nature with the help of the higher one. When the virtues of goodness, compassion, forgiveness, non-attachment and self-mastery have been well established in our nature, we shall then and only then be able to resign our actions completely to the Supreme.

This constant dwelling, as far as possible, on the idea that we are not separate from the whole and that it is the whole or the supreme reality which is realizing its purposes through us, makes it possible for us to perceive the presence of God every where ; in ourselves as well as in all other beings.

It is very important, from the point of view of the *Bhagawad Gītā,* that we should constantly dwell on the idea of God and look upon Him as the source of every thing in the Universe. We are to perceive Him in the sun and the stars, and on the earth in the mountains, the lakes, the trees, the flowers and the grass, in animals and fellow human-beings ; in all animate and inanimate things. All appearances and phenomena are to remind us of the Supreme being. All things are his symbols and manifestations. "I am the origin of all beings. From Me the whole Universe takes its rise. The wise worship me alone. Their minds are full of Me, their lives are dedicated to Me. They always talk about Me and for ever remain happy and contented." (X. 8, 9.)

A wise man is not deluded by the passing forms. He sees the Lord in each and every form. "I, O Arjuna, am the Self seated in the heart of all creatures. I am the beginning, the middle, and the end of all beings" (X, 20). The same Ātmā which gives light to the sun and the stars, gives life, strength and glory to all living beings. We may not be able to understand why the Supreme reality appears in so many higher and lower grades of existence. Our powers of understanding are too feeble to grasp the meaning of all manifestations and happenings. But to a deeply religious mind there is no doubt that there is a Supreme reality behind all passing forms and his faith in Him grows from day to day. "He who sees the Supreme in all beings and all beings in the Supreme is free from all sorrow

and evil." This belief is to be made into a living intense conviction by constant contemplation.

Aldous Huxley expresses the same idea as follows: "At the surface the separate waves, the whirl-pools, the spray, but below them the continuous and undifferentiated expanse of sea, becoming calmer as it deepens till at last there is an absolute still-ness, dark peace at the depths. Peace that by a strange paradox is the substance and source of the storm at the surface. Born of peace, the waves yet destroy peace; destroy it but are necessary; for without storm on the surface there would be no existence, no knowledge of goodness, no effort to allay the leaping frenzy of evil, no re-discovery of the underlying calm and realization that the substance of the frenzy is the same as the substance of peace." (*Eyeless in Gaza*, p, 382). Thus separation or division seems to be the very condition of existence, the condition of being aware of good and evil, of beauty and ugliness. We have the evil of separateness in the world so that there may be a world at all. "Separation even of saint from saint ....One man cannot eat for another. The best must think, must enjoy and suffer, must touch, see, smell, hear, taste, in isolation. The good man is merely a less completely closed universe than the bad but still closed as the atom is closed." (Ibid p. 379-380).

And in the midst of separateness and division, we have to persistently go on trying to realize our oneness with the whole, the underlying depth of peace and

unity. A difficult feat no doubt, and yet worth trying. "Evil is the accentuation of division ; good whatever makes for unity with other lives and other beings. Pride, hatred, anger...........the essentially evil sentiments ; and essentially evil because they are all intensifications of the given reality of separateness, because they insist upon division and uniqueness, because they reject and deny other lives and beings." (Ibid p. 379).

And life-times may have to pass before this unity is realized and made a part of one's being. Indian thought accepts the view that many life-times may have to be passed in overcoming the separating passions of hatred, greed and anger, and in making love and compassion the dominating experiences of our life. Whatever the obstacles, the goal must be pursued without any relaxation of effort on our part.

Chapter IV

The Cultivation of Moral Qualities

The cultivation of moral qualities is essential for the attainment of spiritual goal. A conscious daily effort has to be made in order to cultivate these moral virtues in oneself. They tend to lead an individual towards the realisation of oneness with the whole. The opposite qualities, on the other hand, accentuate division and egoistic separateness. Religious practice yields no fruit if a person is insincere, selfish and given to anger, malice, hatred and similar other evil tendencies.

The *Gītā* gives a list of what it calls divine qualities, in the first three verses of Chapter XVI. In Chapter XIII also most of these qualities are mentioned. (7—10) We may exclude from these two lists qualities which, of course, are an important means to a religious life, but are really non-moral in character. They are service to one's teacher, realization of the miseries of birth, death, old age and disease, unswerving and whole-hearted devotion to God, resort to solitary places for contemplation, distaste for mingling in crowds, constant effort to attain knowledge of the

spirit, the performance of sacrifice, study of the Vedas, stead-fastness in concentration exercises, and attainment of wisdom. The rest of the qualities mentioned in the verses are moral qualities. They can be arranged under the following heads :—

1. Harmlessness, Compassion and Charity

The first law of a civilized society is, that its members should not injure one another by word, deed or thought. This is only a negative statement of the moral law which requires us, on the positive side, to help one another. We are first required to desist from all such actions as lead to the injury of our fellowmen in any form whatsoever. Not to speak of human beings, we should not do any harm to lower animals for the sake of sport and recreation or for the gratification of our appetite. Injury to human beings includes, besides physical violence, all acts and words which may bring unhappiness in their lives. Harsh speech, fault-finding, back-biting, exploiting other people for personal ends and being unjust to them are so many ways of inflicting injury. Non-injury or non-cruelty is the basic law of ethical life and should be scrupulously observed by all people.

This, however, should not be understood to mean that the guilty and criminal-minded people should not be punished for the wrongs done by them to their fellow human beings. If, in the performance of one's duty, one has to deal strictly with other people, one has a perfect right to do so. No one would hold a surgeon guilty of violence if he causes pain to a person

in order to save his life. Poisonous, ferocious and harmful animals can not be treated in the same manner as harmless ones. If a country becomes involved in a war, its inhabitants can not refuse to fight and to play their part, on the plea that it would mean doing violence to other people. Violence, sometimes, becomes necessary in order to save an individual or a community from much greater harm. Harmlessness, therefore, should be understood to mean that in daily social intercourse, in normal circumstances, human beings should not injure one another. The rule includes all human beings irrespective of the fact that they belong to one religion or another, to one country or to another. We are not to make any distinction between man and man in respect of the application of the principle of Ahiṁsā, unless other circumstances make a difference. It is not enough that we do not injure one another. We should, whenever necessary, help one another in time of need. As members of a particular community we are responsible for one another. We should, therefore, actively help all those whom we know or even do not know and should take pleasure in so doing. When any body is in need, we should offer our help with the greatest willingness. It may be in the form of lending for a while our umbrella, or cycle or book or any other thing to our friends and comrades. We should not grudge any help which we can render to a person.

Besides these small helps that we can render, we should not grudge our time and energy to give what

ever help we can to the suffering, the sick, and the disabled. This duty specially devolves upon us, if the afflicted person happens to be our neighbour or some body who is very well known to us. We can help a poor beggar with food, or a little money, but it should be done with gentleness and grace. Compassion and charity are great virtues and they should be exercised whenever we get a chance and can afford to do so. Charity or Dāna is active benevolence. Each person can choose for himself any field for purposes of social service and take pleasure in making himself useful in that particular sphere.

Compassion, love and benevolence bind us to other human beings. They lift us out of our narrow egoism and make it possible for us to breathe in an open and refreshing atmosphere. It is a practical method of realizing the unity of mankind, and of gradually enlarging ourselves.

The *Bhagawad Gītā* wants us to treat all creatures alike. "He, O Arjuna ; who sees all beings with an equal eye, as the image of his own self, whether in pleasure or in pain, is a great Yogī". (VI. 32) In verse 25 Chapter V, Śrī Kṛṣṇa speaks of the holy man as one who is *Surva Bhūta Hiteratah* i. e. one who rejoices in doing good to all creatures. The active pursuit of benevolence is the ideal which the *Gīta* places before us. There is not the slightest doubt that the great man of the *Gīta* does not keep himself aloof and unconcerned in the midst of social ills of all kinds. He is to go forth and actively participate in all

programmes of social welfare. Each person is required to perform his particular duty in the spirit of social service. A self-contained and selfish person is strongly condemned by the author of the *Gīta*. "He who enjoys objects given by God without making an offering in return, is verily a thief" (III. 12) The individuals are not separate and independent units leading lives of their own. They are to be viewed as parts of the social organism. The common soul of humanity dwells in all of them and so no body is expected, if he wants to lead a really happy life, to take more than his share from the common fund meant for all. Each person is to take whatever he requires for his maintenance, but his main function is to make his maximum contribution to the good of mankind as a whole.

2 Truthfulness, uprightness and simplicity (unostentatiousness). Truthfulness was regarded as a great virtue in ancient India. Truthful behaviour towards other people indicates a wholesome attitude to one's fellowmen. People speak falsehood either for selfish reasons or because they are afraid of others. In both cases it is a bad and undignified trait of character. People who are knit together in a healthy social bond do not deceive one another nor are they afraid of one another. The democratic ideal of liberty, equality and fraternity should cut at the root of all untruthful behaviour. Truthfulness is a social trait and follows directly from the spirit of non-injury and benevolence. We shall never think

of harming any body through deceitfulness and falsehood; if our mind is full of kindly and charitable feelings for him. Of course, there may be certain occasions when it may be necessary to tell a lie. There are occasions when truth-telling would actually injure others. A doctor need not speak truthfully to a patient about his serious condition nor are we to speak the truth to a person who is bent upon committing violence on another person. One may similarly make a false statement to save himself from robbers, thieves and other evil-minded persons. It would be wrong to infer from these instances that one can always tell a lie if it serves his purpose. He would, thereby, do harm to others and violate established social institutions which have proved their usefulness in a long course of time. This kind of falsehood issues out of gross selfishness and does injury to other persons and to the society at large. Sometimes people tell a lie because they are afraid of displeasing other people by giving a true account of facts. That shows a weak and undignified attitude of mind. One can not think highly of himself if he is so afraid of others that he dare not to speak out the truth in their presence. Of course, truth should be spoken, as far as possible, in a non-offensive manner. One can be sweet and truthful at the same time. Our love of truth should not become a source of humiliation and annoyance to others. Nor should truth be blurted out when it is not necessary and when we can very well maintain silence. A truth which is not needed at a particular

time and is spoken just to humiliate others or in anger or for some other similar evil design is not truth, but it is really an exhibition of hiṁsā or a violent state of mind.

Uprightness or sincerity stands for perfect harmony between one's thought, word and deed. An upright man is sincere in what he says or does. He says nothing but what he believes to be true and he acts according to what he says. There is no desire in a sincere man to show himself off before others, to appear as anything but what he really is. Sincerity is the application of truthfulness at all levels of one's life. An upright man would not allow falsehood to taint any aspect of his personality.

True uprightness should ultimately take the form of simplicity or what *Gītā* calls 'unostentatiousness'. If an upright man is conscious of his uprightness, he has not yet reached the highest stage of simplicity or unstudied frankness of behaviour. Such a man forgets himself in his relations with others ; he is unrestrained, easy, good-humoured and child-like in social relations. It is uprightness without selfconsciousness and is a rare acquisition. All people love to associate with persons who are simple, loving, and completely unaffected. Simplicity is the highest stage of truthfulness and is a sublime trait. It shows itself in the daily life of such a man ; in the things he eats, the dress he wears, and the way in which he behaves towards others. He combines in himself the wisdom of a grown-up man and the simple ways

of a child. There is no attempt to practise affectation or to show himself as superior to other people. A European mystic of 17th century says—"A simple heart will love all that is most precious ; husband or wife, parent or child, brother or friend without marring its singleness, (i. e. its single hearted devotion to God). External things will have no attraction save in as much as they lead the soul to him ; all exaggeration and unreality, affectation and falsehood must pass away from such a one, as the dews dry up before the sunshine."* The restless dwelling on the self robs a man of true simplicity and peace of mind.

3. **Patience (non-anger) freedom from malice and fault finding, forgiveness.** We are liable to become angry when some one thwarts our wishes, makes a derogatory or rude remark or does us a wrong which we can not easily forget. Of course, we need not tamely submit to a wrong or an injustice done to us, but we should be able to assert our rights without losing our temper or becoming angry. Anger is an undesirable state of mind in man. One who has learnt to remain calm and unperturbed in the midst of great provocation is a great man indeed. No one can behave rationally or remain stable-minded in a state of anger. We can not think properly, speak properly, and act properly when we are angry. Anger clouds our mind and makes us behave in a manner for which we feel sorry afterwards. The *Gītā* describes the genesis and the consequences of anger in the

*Quoted by Aldous Huxley. Perennial Philosophy, p. 130.

following words—"When a person dwells constantly on objects of sense, he forms an attachment to them. From attachment springs the desire for that object and from the non-fulfilment of desire springs anger. From anger arises confusion of mind, from confusion, loss of memory and from the loss of memory, the loss of reason. With the loss of reason, the man is completely ruined." (II. 62, 63).

Anger is a negative emotion and such an emotion generally arises when we are confronted with a situation with which we cannot deal intelligently. The moment we begin to think about the nature, the cause or the effect of the emotion-producing situation, we tend to acquire a calm state of mind. Therefore, we should gradually form the habit of stopping immediate emotional response to a provocative situation. The mere fact of checking emotional outburst should be followed, almost at the same time, by taking a thoughtful attitude towards the situation. We shall then realise that the person who behaves in an undesirable manner towards us, perhaps, cannot help acting as he does because of being the kind of man that he is. We may be led to pity him instead of being angry with him. We may even feel that we too have faults of our own and as we naturally want people to be patient in regard to our faults, so we, too, should be patient towards the faults of others. We are what we are mostly because of our inherited tendencies and environmental influences. Our personal responsibility for our mistakes and follies is very small indeed.

The ability to exercise control over our anger is a sign of strength. Outbursts of anger dissipate our energies. We make a ludicrous exhibition of ourselves by frequently giving vent to anger against others. Even what is called righteous indignation is equally unnecessary. One should fight against evil and injustice by all means, but one need not stage demonstrations of anger on that ground. To give vent to anger is definitely a weakness and should be avoided to the best of one's ability.

Another human weakness, intimately connected with the above consists in taking a malicious pleasure in the misfortunes of others. Good people feel compassion for the sufferings of others but there is no dearth of people who feel themselves superior and gratified when they see others in the grip of trouble and misfortune. They feel unhappy when they find other people, especially if they happen to be their relatives, neighbours or rivals in business, in a state of prosperity and well-being. Fault-finding belongs to the same category. It is not that the fault finder is free from faults himself ; but he shuts his eyes, for the time being, to his own faults and dwells with zest and abandon on the shortcomings of others. When four or more persons sit together, it is not long before they begin to slander some one or the other of their acquaintances. Some times the faults which are dwelt upon are imaginary and their sole purpose is to get an unholy delight in lowering a particular person in the estimation of others.

One will have to un-learn all these unwholesome ways, if one is to make any progress in spiritual life. Spirituality and anger ill go together. A person who has dedicated his life to God is free from malice and anger, is full of compassion and is friendly to all (XII, 13). Spirituality requires of us to be charitable and loving towards others. We have to develop an attitude of understanding and patience towards other people. In fact the *Gītā* wants us to forgive a guilty person when we can do it without doing any harm to others including the wrong-doer himself. If, sometimes, the infliction of punishment is thought necessary, it may be resorted to without any anger or resentment against the offender. When the injury is confined to oneself and its bad consequences do not extend to others, a really great man would have no hesitation in forgiving the guilty person. On the spiritual plane of life, love, charity and forgiveness should always be preferred to the cherishing of ignoble passions, however natural and justifiable they may appear to be. There is a beautiful story, related by Dr. Har Dayal, of a muslim savant. "Amir Hassan, uncle of Prophet Mohammed sat for dinner. The slave who carried the dishes dropped them on the floor which was covered with costly carpets. The slave bowed low and said atonce, "Our prophet has taught that he who masters his anger is a wise man." The Amir replied, 'I am not angry, go away'. The slave continued 'our prophet has taught that he who forgives the offender, is still wiser.' The Amir said,

'I forgive thee, go away'. The slave then added, 'our prophet has also taught, that he who returns good for evil is the wisest of all." The Amir smiled and said, 'I give thee thy freedom and also this sum of money with it, now go away and be happy'.*

The religious leaders of mankind have taught us to return good for evil. "Hatred can be cured by love and not by hatred" said the Buddha to his followers. He taught them to keep their mind unsullied by thoughts of hatred, not to allow evil words to escape their lips and to always feel compassion and love towards others. Christ, similarly, enjoined on his followers to love their enemies and do good to those who hated them and persecuted them. And Śrī Kṛṣṇa also preaches the gospel of forgiveness. Forgiveness finds an honoured place in the verses given above.

4. **Humility, non-egoism**. It is only men of shallow minds who think too highly of themselves. Wise people, on the other hand, are always modest in their attitude and behaviour. A proud man makes too high an estimate of himself and his achievements, and so goes about parading his virtues and skills. Such a person is generally rude and cold in his manners and discourteous in his speech. In order to impress others with his greatness, a proud person very often indulges in self-praise and boastfulness. It makes him disliked by his fellow men. As a writer puts it, "people may like to praise you but they

*Hints on *Self-Culture*, Page 228.

never wish to hear you praising yourself." When you begin to praise yourself, the people begin to think of your faults. People, as a rule, do not love or esteem a proud man.

One should be humble and modest, however successful he might be in his particular vocation. A modest man goes on improving himself. He is wise enough to know that however great his learning or his achievement may be, it is nothing as compared to what is still to be known or to be achieved. He is not averse to cultivating the acquaintance of men who are superior to him, and learning from them. One can attain to higher reaches of personality only if he is humble and modest, and eager to improve himself from day to day till the hour of death. We should rest assured that our merit, if any, would not remain unnoticed. It is not necessary that we should ourselves try to publicise our achievement. We shall find that others know about it somehow. Real worth does not remain hidden for long. So one need not blow one's own trumpet.

We are proud when we compare ourselves only to those who are inferior to ourselves. It is an unwholesome state of mind, and indicates smallness of personality. We are liable to feel humble, when we have a vision of the vastness and the grandeur of the universe in which we live. "What is man after all" says a writer, "in his individual capacity but only a fly on the mighty wheel of things......When we are in health, we bustle about and feel that we are tremend-

ous fellows and are really the hub of things, so that in case any thing goes wrong with us, there will be a mournful vacuum in the society with which we are connected. Then some day the bubble of our vanity is pricked and we are confined to bed. During illness, we just lie down in bed, desiring nothing, doing nothing, thinking of nothing. These are just the days of illumination for us ; for it is now that we realize that the world can go on as before, as though it had never heard of us."*

It is not easy to get rid of pride ; often we are not conscious of it. It may be present when we think that we have got rid of it. A man may go through great austerities to purify himself, 'still the pride is there. The pride of having gone though the austerities, the pride of having purified the self.' One should therefore be very careful in this matter, for he may believe that he is quite normal, but others would know his weakness and dislike him for it. Well has it been said, "A greedy man sees only money ; a lover sees only the sweet-heart ; a revengeful man sees only the enemy ; but a proud man sees nothing."

Humility is essential for a person who is treading the path of spiritual attainment. The major test of spirituality is the effacement of self. As long as the ego remains prominent in a person, there is not much of spirituality in him. How can the Divine find its way into a soul which is already full of the ego. In the

*Quoted by Lala Sain Das. *Message of the Gītā*. p. 150.

words of Chaitanya, we are to make ourselves as humble as grass and as patient as a tree. A man of true humility does not boast, does not seek publicity, nor does he live on popularity, "He is spiritually high and yet gentle to those who surround him. He is a friend in times of trouble ; when others fail, he stands."

There should be no slackness in our effort to demolish the wall of egoism, which we have built around ourselves and which divides us from the rest of the universe. Unless we give up our egoism or the acute sense of separateness, how can we contact the Divine. A proud man thinks of himself as if he were the most important entity in the world, and so can not taste the sweet joy of participation in the universal life. In our ignorance we may think that if we step out of ourselves into the wider domain of freedom, we shall not be safe and comfortable. We are very much mistaken in this view. We should always be trying to break the self-fabricated chain of selfishness to enter into the spirit of all-embracing love and sympathy for others.

5. **Contentment or absence of greed.** We all need means of self-subsistence, so we have to work in order to get them. But in modern society the desire for possession has attained a disproportionately large importance. Under the urge of this desire, people go on piling things and amassing wealth to such an extent that these possessions, instead of developing their personality, hinder its growth and expansion.

Greedy people are so obsessed with the idea of wealth and material possession that they have neither the time nor the inclination to devote themselves to the improvement of their minds. They think that they are very great men because they have an abundance of bank balance and possessions.

It is also worth noting that great wealth cannot be acquired by honest means. "No one can acquire enormous wealth by his own unaided efforts, even if he should work in the most fertile field on the earth or in a gold mine, or in a bed of pearl oysters. Large amounts of money are not made, they are taken. All excessive wealth has its origin in the exploitation and oppression of the working people." Concentration of wealth in a few hands is always indicative of social injustice. Justice requires that every person in a society should get what is due to him. What actually happens is that some people who are more powerful or more cunning than others, take away large chunks of social wealth for themselves leaving only a few scraps to be distributed among the large majority that remains.

Greed is not a natural urge like sex or hunger. It is an artificial product of the competitive system. Each one of us has to earn his living. If society were differently organised, preferably on the model of the physical organism and its parts, things would be different. Wealth would belong to society as a whole, and its distribution would take place on the basis of the needs and the work of its component members, just

as in a living body each organ gets the sustenance which it requires for itself, out of the common fund to which it also makes its own distinctive contribution.

If a person has somehow come to possess large wealth, the best use that he can make of it is to devote it to charitable purposes. Instead of leaving the whole of it to his children and his grand-children, he may treat it as a public trust to be spent for public welfare. It should be clearly realised that wealth can get for us material things mostly. It can help us to chiefly satisfy our physical needs but man requires much more than physical satisfaction for true happiness. Material things can satisfy the animal part of man. The cultural and spiritual needs of men remain for ever beyond their reach. Epictatus, a Greek philosopher of antiquity has well said, "our property should fit the needs of our body as our shoes do, neither should be over-large or over-elaborate lest they cause us to stumble."

Greed is a low human passion. It indicates the inner poverty of man. No amount of material wealth can compensate for the lack of inner riches. Once a person takes to an excessive love of money, he forgets all about the spiritual side of life and becomes exclusively the slave of matter.

A spiritually-inclined person must lead a life of simplicity. He must have only as much wealth as is necessary to meet his various needs. If he has more wealth than he requires, let him have no attachment

to it and use it for the benefit of the people. We have to clearly impress it on our mind that love for money and spiritual life cannot go together.

6. **Self-control (Austerity).** self-control is a basic moral quality without which no spiritual progress is possible. It implies regulation of our sense life, in the interest of life as a whole. By means of our senses, we come in contact with a multitude of objects, both agreeable and disagreeable. Agreeable and pleasant objects attract us to themselves. Their pleasure-giving character is a source of attraction to us, so much so that sometimes we become excessively engrossed in the temping things of the world and forget other much more important tasks of life. Human life is a very complex affair, made up of a large number of elements. Complete happiness is only possible if all aspects of life receive due attention at our hands. Hence the great need for self-restraint in the face of the temptations of life. Self-control does not mean self-mortification or annihilation of natural desires. We are born with certain appetites and sensual urges. They are essential for the continuance of life. They are also great reservoirs of energy. Like the running waters of a river, we can divert the energies of our senses from one object to another but we cannot eliminate them altogether, as many religious people erroneously believe. In the Katha Upanishad, the sense desires are compared to horses yoked to the chariot of the body of which the soul is the master. A human being

cannot accomplish the pilgrimage of life, if the horses were disabled from doing their work. What is wanted is that they should not be allowed to get off the track leading to the goal. They should be kept in a healthy condition to enable them to perform their function properly. "On his way to a place of pilgrimage in high hills, the pilgrim comes across flower-beds, springs of delicious water, birds with beautiful plumage, snow-capped hills, magnificent trees and many other aspects of hill scenery. For successful pilgrimage, it is not necessary that he should shut his eyes to the lovely scenes, close his mouth to the sweet waters and shut his ears to lovely songs of birds. All that is needed is that neither the attractions nor the hardships of the journey should be able to dissuade him from pursuing his march onward. His chief care should be to be ever mindful of the goal, by keepking it constantly in view."*

The author of the *Bhagawad Gītā* is not against the regulated enjoyment of sense desires. In one of his mystic moods, Śri Kṛṣṇa speaks of himself as Kāma, or desire regulated by Dharma (Dharma avridhokama). Desire-inspired actions are bad only when our desires get out of control and transcend the bounds of Dharma or righteousness. Within limits, the satisfaction of natural desires is necessitated by our physical and mental needs.

The ancient Greeks held temperance in high regard. The need of temperance or moderation

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*Lala Sain Dass. Message of the *Gītā*, p. 21-22.

arises especially in regard to the two senses of tongue and sex. These two senses afford the largest measure of temptation to a human being, and it is mostly in regard to them that the need of self-control is felt the most. The ancient Greeks held a low opinion of a person who was immoderatly drawn to these sense pleasures. The deleterious effects of intemperate indulgence in these pleasures are soon felt. While their moderate and regulated enjoyment leads to health and well-being, and invigorates both body and mind, excessive addiction to them impairs vitality and has a weakening effect allround. The individual is rendered unfit to achieve anything worth while in life. Great enterprises in life require great energy of body and mind and this energy is made available by properly regulating physical appetites. When a person eats an excessive quantity of food, much of the energy of the body is used up for digesting it and so very little is left for the tasks of life, the performance of which alone makes us dignified human beings. Similarly unregulated indulgence in sex leaves very little energy for accomplishing great things in life.

The Gītā's conception of Tapas or austerity is not what came to prevail in India at a later period. According to the *Gītā* Tapas does not mean mortification of the body, but only a regulated life of the senses. In chapter VI while describing the method of Yogik concentration, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that Yoga is not possible to a person who eats too much or who eats too little, not to one who is given to too much sleep

or to one who remains mostly awake. It is possible only when a person takes due amounts of food and exercise, and sleeps and wakes at proper times. The emphasis here is on moderation and not on mortification. In Chapter XVII three types of Tapas or austerity are mentioned ; bodily, vocal and mental. Physical Tapas includes willing service to one's teachers and learned persons, the worship of God and keeping the body pure, chaste and non-violent. Vocal austerity consists in using such speech as gives no offence and is truthful, pleasant, beneficial and given to the recitation of scriptures. Mental austerity consists in keeping the mind tranquil, silent, gentle, pure and self-controlled. Tapas, in all these forms, implies wholesome control on the activities of body, speech and mind, so that only the right thing could be done through them.

The *Bhagawad Gītā* thus does not prescribe harsh bodily penance as a means of spiritual enlightenment. We are required to perform with our body, speech and mind, all those duties which fall to our lot, on account of the circumstances of our life, and refrain from doing things, whether bodily, vocal or mental, which are against Dḥarma or the law of righteousness. Along with this, we are to bear with patience and resignation all unavoidable crosses and hardships of life, all kinds of affliction, sickness and infirmity, the loss of friends or want of necessary comforts in life.

All this requires regulation of our sense desires.

As already stated we cannot annihilate but can only divert their energy to higher objectives of life. When we devote ourselves to great ideals, our interest in sense-gratification is gradually drained off into higher channels of expression. "The objects of the senses" say the *Gītā* "cease to affect a person who does not feed upon them though the desire for them remains. Even the desire disappears when he has seen the supreme" (II. 59) If we do not allow our senses to come in contact with their objects, they may, for the time being, be withdrawn from them ; but the desire for them does not die away. This latent desire also disappears when one has realized the Supreme being, or in other words when the energy of the senses is completely absorbed in the pursuit of higher spiritual ends. This is undoubtedly the best means of controlling the mind

7. Fearlessness, Fortitude, Valour (Teja) & Stead fastness. All these virtues are various forms of courage. Life is not a bed of roses. It contains both pleasant and painful experiences. Pleasure tempts us very often to excess and immoderation. The virtue of self-control or temperance keeps the pursuit of pleasure within reasonable bounds. The idea of pain, on the other hand, produces fear and a tendency to avoid or run away from fear-producing situations. If we are to perform our duties perfectly, we shall have to learn to face unpleasant situations and to stick to our ground, inspite of all painful consequences. Fearlessness and courage have to be learnt right from

the age of childhood. Courage does not mean that the emotion of fear is not aroused at all by dangerous stimuli. It means that we do what is right inspite of the presence of fear. Fear is one reaction to a dangerous situation, anger is another such reaction. In an angry state of mind we feel a tendency to attack or injure the object which threatens our safety or creates an obstruction in the fulfilment of our wish. Fear like anger is a sudden reaction and as long as it lasts, it keeps us in an extremely uneasy and painful state of mind.

In primitive times, man had to face frequent fear-causing situations, in the form of ferocious animals and men, and oft-recurring natural calamities for which there was no remedy in those times. As people grew civilised and learnt to control the forces of nature and the wild beasts of the jungle, the causes of actual fear diminished considerably. In modern times, there are very few occasions when great fears are actually aroused as was the case with our primitive ancestors; but fears in the form of anxieties, worries and timidities have multiplied to an alarming extent. A modern man is usually afraid not of what actually happens but of what may happen in the future. And what he is afraid of may not actually happen at all. As a matter of fact, most of our fears and worries do not materialise. So we go on making ourselves miserable practically for nothing.

The best way, therefore, to deal with these

anxieties and fears is to look them in the face i. e. to try to understand them and think out the way to tackle them, when their objects acutally materialise. As soon as we think about them rationally and systematically, they lose much of their force and do not remain as fearsome as they previously appeared. In a state of fear and anxiety the power to think is lost. If we could only calmly think of the situation, instead of getting panicky and nervous, not only would we lose much of the fear but we shall be able to deal with the fear-producing object in a proper manner. This habit can be cultivated and made into a stable attitude of one's personality. Most of us simply keep on irrationally revolving the object of our anxiety in our mind instead of trying to give any thought to it.

Life would lose all its zest if mankind were to become completely free from difficulty and hardship. A too easy life is a boresome life. We can realise the seriousness and importance of living only when we face and conquer hardships. They have an invigorating effect on our mind and soul, while an abundance of pleasures would simply demoralize and innervate us. It is a matter of satisfaction that God, in his wise dispensation, has distributed pain and pleasure in a more or less right proportion in human life. It does not mean that we should passively go on bearing pain and evil. Evil and suffering are a challenge to our powers to conquer them and thereby insure a more satisfying way of living. When one evil is overcome we feel relaxed. After a time a new problem

arises and so life goes on in the midst of pain and pleasure.

We should not forget that we have the power to bear even the hardest of calamities. Those who have lived for forty years or more in the world, have usually gone through most of the hardships that face mankind. They know what they are and have borne them as a matter of course. Pain appears very fearful in anticipation. But when it actually comes, we can bear it if nothing else can be done. After it has passed away, we are again as lively as before as if nothing serious had taken place.

Possibly we are more afraid of death than of any thing else. Provided we can keep alive, we can as a rule put up with any amount of hardship and pain. Death alone appears to be most fearful. This fear has to be overcome by constant thoughtfulness. It is not certain that the dying person really knows that he is dying. Most probably he gradually gets into a state of coma and then passes away without knowing it. There is thus no fear of death when we are actually dying. We also know that many men have gladly embraced death in the pursuit of great ends. In the glow of enthusiasm, death becomes a paltry thing. It appears fearful when our lives are small. If we fill our lives with great ideals and noble visions, death would lose much of its fear.

A student of Yoga has to get rid of the tendency to cling to life and the consequent fear of death. By

proper reflection, according to the *Gītā*, death may come to be looked upon only as an incident in the long pilgrimage of life. The present life is a stage in our going towards the final goal. It will be foolish to stick to one stage for ever. One has to move forward. When the Higher Power rings down the curtain, we should depart with grace and cheerfulness for further spiritual adventures.

Fortitude is a form of courage, which comes into play when a calamity is actually upon us and when nothing else can be done than to bear it patiently and with calm resignation. To indulge in loud lamentation or to show signs of trepidation and unseemly nervousness do not fit into the code of a gentleman. During the great French revolution of 1789, many French noble men and women were guillotined. One very inspiring feature of the episode was that these men and women mostly went to meet their death with unruffled calm and dignity. It is human lot to suffer loss of fortune, bereavement, physical pain, and many other kinds of hardship. While small minds lament and cry, great people bear their hardships with fortitude and resignation.

Valour or Teja is a quality shown by many great men who not only remain calm in the midst of great calamities but even display cheerfulness and vigour and do not lose heart when face to face with seemingly insurmountable difficulties. Such people spread hope and cheerfulness in the midst of gloom and despair.

They laugh at difficulties and march ahead as if dangers cannot touch them. They are inspiring figures of history and born leaders of mankind.

Mankind are prone to give up their efforts when persistant obstacles make it difficult to achieve a particular object. In such circumstances courage in the form of steadfastness or perseverance proves helpful. Every great achievement requires sustained efforts. No body becomes a great musician in a day. He has to go on making sustained efforts for a number of years inspite of failures and reverses. The virtue of steadfastness is especially necessary for a student of Yoga or spiritual discipline.

8. **Purity of Life.** The virtue of purity goes beyond the sphere of good conduct. It requires of us not only to be good in outward behaviour but to be good at heart as well. It is a great thing if a man can act rightly inspite of the evil desires which spontaneously arise within his mind. We, as ordinary human beings, are prone to envy, ill-will, fear, hatred, revengefulness and many other evil passions. But if we can control our evil tendencies and prevent them from influencing our outward conduct, we are good men though not pure-hearted. We may hate a person at heart and yet appoint him to a job under our control because he has the requisite ability. We have, in this case, done the right thing though we have not been able to keep our mind free from hatred. A soldier on the battle field feels afraid and wants to run away, and yet sticks to his post of duty. There are numerous

instances in life when a man, inspite of having undesirable wishes, keeps to the right track. We become bad not by entertaining bad wishes but when we act on those bad wishes. Morality requires of a person to act rightly without being moved by any desire to act otherwise. A really moral person would rise above both likes and dislikes, hate and love, and act in a way which is morally right and perfect.

The ideal of purity requires of us to free our mind from all undesirable and evil states of mind such as hatred, anger, fear, etc. and to fill it with such desirable emotions as love, compassion, courage, self-confidence patience etc. While morality would be content with goodness of conduct, religion would insist on our possessing a pure heart as well.

We should not only be good in action; we should, at the same time, disallow impure tendencies to find lodgement in our heart. A really spiritual man would be free from all thoughts of hatred and ill-will. He would not hate his enemies and would not think of revenging himself upon those who do him wrong.

An impure heart leads to a state of bondage. We become bound when our mind is assailed by ignoble desires or negative emotions. Purification of heart is essential for the attainment of real freedom. Our thoughts ultimately determine our acts. We should, therefore, be constantly making efforts to purify our thoughts. This is made possible by regular daily meditation on positive emotions like love, compassion, truth, and great ideals of life. As

long as our thoughts are turned to things of sense, they are liable to become impure and confused. A real Yogi, though moving about among the objects of sense, does not allow his thought to be influenced by them. He is like a person walking in sleep, unaffected by the things of the world. Such a person need not cut himself off from the world. His mind, heart, life and body do their prescribed works, but every thing is now done in an elevated and divine manner.

Purity leads to tranquillity of mind and to perfect enjoyment of life. A perfect enjoyment is one in which the object is not enjoyed in itself, or for itself, but as a manifestation of God in the world where it is not things but the divine in them which forms the real object of our enjoyment. Things and persons become as it were, the forms and symbols of the Divine. Everywhere in all objects and persons, the beauty, joy, and love of the Supreme are discerned and experienced. The objects, from the higher point of view, become merely the vehicles and carriers of the Divine joy, love and beauty.

That which mars the purity of our enjoyment is personal desire; —a desire to satisfy our cravings and to possess things for ourselves alone, to hanker after domination, success and satisfaction of all impulses which arise within. It leads to a perpetual state of unrest and mental disturbance. Purity or freedom of mind from all negative emotions is essential for true spiritual living.

A true Yogī, therefore, constantly aims at being sincere and pure. His daily endeavour is to hate none and to extend his hand of helpfulness and friendship to all alike, whether they like him or do not like him, whether they do him good or try to harm him. A sincere person would naturally like that his inner self should be at one with the outer self. This means purity of mind. When the mind is thus emptied of all undesirable thoughts, the person becomes pure-hearted like a shining jewel of pure lustre.

9. **Tranquillity: Wisdom.** The last virtue to be commented upon is tranquillity. It, in fact, provides a test that the other virtues mentioned previously have been acquired. If a person cannot remain calm and serene in all happenings of life, he has not gone far on the path of spiritual development. Whatever a man does, he should do it without being excited in any way. "Whether you walk or stand", says Buddha, "or rest or lie, do all this composedly". A constant state of tranquillity shows that inner harmony has been attained and so one feels quite at home in all circumstances of life. When there is hustle and bustle, all around such a person remains calm and unshaken like a river which flows quietly through a city of nervous and excited men and women. A quiet and tranquil man can put much greater energy in his daily work than another whose energy is greatly dissipated as the result of excitement and nervousness. A tranquil man keeps happy and contented, when people all around are seething with turmoil and perturbation.

If one has learnt to maintain a peaceful state of mind in the midst of distraction and excitement, he has learnt the real art of living. It is the epitome of all spiritual attainments.

Very characteristically, the author of the *Gītā*, in Chapter XIII, speaks of the attainment of these various qualities as the attainment of true knowledge or wisdom. We know what justice is by being just ourselves and the same is true of all virtues and excellences. No body can understand love unless one has passionately loved some one. Real spiritual knowledge, therefore, dawns upon a person only after he has begun to live a virtuous life in the light of the qualities referred to above. Knowledge thus coincides with being. We have first to make ourselves good and moral before we can have real knowledge or wisdom. There is no short cut to a life of self-realisation or spiritual knowledge.

For the attainment of this object regular daily meditation on these perfections is necessary.

We shall deal with the remaining qualities such as non-attachment, absence of clinging to objects of sense, equal-mindedness and renunciation in the next chapter, along with the method of Yogic concentration.

Chapter V

The method of Concentration.

A religion is not content with the mere promulgation of theoretical doctrines. It always aims at laying down a practical discipline for the attainment of religious goal. The practical discipline may take the form of sacrificial offerings, recitation of prayers and hymns, public worship in temples or of exercises in mental concentration. The author of the *Bhagawad Gītā* recognises the value of sacrificial offerings which were in vogue in many religious circles in those days. He also sees the importance of the worship of various kinds of spirits and deities, and is not prepared to run down even the most primitive forms of worship which give satisfaction to people of a certain grade of intelligence. The religion of rites and ceremonies appeals to the majority of men and women in all countries and so it can not be condemned out-right as being of no importance. It gives them emotional satisfaction and provides an incentive to lead a good life.

After having spoken very highly of a *Jñanin* or

the man of wisdom who resorts to the Supreme being for His own sake, the *Gītā* Says,

> "Men whose understanding has been warped by worldly desires, resort to other deities, performing various rites according to the impulse of their inborn nature. Whatever deity a man chooses to worship with faith and devotion, I make that faith of his unwavering and firm.
>
> Endowed with that faith, he worships that deity and gets from it whatever he prays for. In reality I alone am the giver of these benefits.
>
> For these men of small minds pray only for what is transient and perishable. The worshipper of the gods go to the gods : those who are my devotees come to me." (VII. 20-23).

The same idea is repeated more, and less in the same form, in Chapter IX, 25.

> "Worshippers of the gods go to the gods, worshippers of the dead ancestors go to the region of the dead ancestors (*Pitṛs*), worshippers of the spirits (*Bhūtas*) go to the spirits and those who worship me come to me."

There is not the slightest doubt that, according to the author of the *Gītā*, the worship of God is the highest worship. Other forms of worship may bring some benefit to their followers, but the highest spiritual advantage accrues to those who try to devote themselves to the worship of the Supreme being. And

Arjuna is asked to dedicate himself completely to the worship of the Supreme. "Whatever you do, O son of Kunti, whatever you eat, whatever sacrifice you make, whatever you give, whatever austerity you undergo, do that as an offering to me." (IX. 27).

Thus though the *Gītā* accepts the use of various symbols and ritualistic observances, it reserves its highest praise for the worship of one eternal God in a spirit of complete dedication. The whole world, with all its manifestations, is to become a symbol of the Supreme being who resides in each and every object of the world, and the whole life of man and each act of that life is to be transformed into a sort of continuous sacrifice and offering to the Lord of the universe.

Rites and ceremonies are inseparable adjuncts of public worship. It would be wrong to under-estimate the virtue of public worship in the life of communities. It keeps the religious spirit alive among the members of a community. For the majority of mankind, the religion of public worship, with its rites and ceremonies, is the only religion which they can understand and which can appeal to them. This is the form which the spiritual intuition of a great seer or a prophet takes after sometime. The Buddha, during his life time, denounced the use of rites and ceremonies but when, sometime after his death, Buddhism became an established religion, all sorts of rites and ceremonies were introduced into it to highten its public appeal.

The worshipper is said to obtain, from his god, the object for the attainment of which he takes to its worship. The long-continued worship of the deity for the fulfilment of a particular purpose rouses an intense longing for the object in the mind of the devotee. He thinks of it again and again. His sub-conscious mind is strongly impregnated with positive suggestions continually flowing into it from the conscious mind. When a desire is cherished with great intensity of feeling (*Śraddhā*), and for a great length of time, the surcharged subconscious mind of the individual leads to the making of right efforts with the consequent realisation, in most cases, of the desired object.

The *Gītā* makes it clear that only men of small understanding impress their sub-conscious mind with a desire for ephemeral and perishable objects. Really wise and intelligent persons, on the other hand, like to dwell on divine and noble thoughts. When the subconscious is impressed with divine qualities it becomes easy to attain one's union with the great Self which abides in all hearts. A person who constantly meditates on the Universal Self, has his thoughts fixed on the Supreme Being even at the time of death. He casts off the body while meditating on God. Whatever thoughts are impressed by a person, on the sub-conscious mind at the time of death will, according to the *Bhagawad Gītā*, determine the quality of his life in the next birth (VIII. 5,6).

A religion, in the real sense, is a matter of individual relation between himself and what he

regards as the Divine or the object of his devotion and contemplation. It is essentially an individual affair which is accomplished when he is alone with his object of worship. And here various sorts of spiritual exercises play their part. "What ritual is to public worship, spiritual exercises are to private devotion. They are devices to be used by the solitary individual, when he enters into his closet, shuts the door and prays to his Father".*

The Method of Yogic Concentration.

There are, in the history of religion, many instances of born mystics who from their very child-hood, experienced trance-like condition and mystic visions. Apart from these religious geniuses, whose number naturally cannot be large, there are people who, from the age of child-hood, exhibit religious tendencies which find expression in religious acts such as the daily study of scriptures, listening to religious discourses and religious poetry and constant meditation on religious truths. Such persons possess an ardent desire for spiritual illumination. The things of the world attract them not and they feel supreme delight in the company of holy men, and the contemplation of divine perfections.

They sometimes show signs of deep unrest and emotional suffering on account of their failure to achieve God-realisation. There is usually, in their

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*Aldous Huxley. *Perennial Philosophy*. PP. 314.

case, a long period of striving after truth, before the much-desired divine vision may be vouchsafed to them. The possible psychological explanation of this sudden illumination, whenever it occurs, is that on account of long-continued occupation with religious ideas and emotions, the mind becomes sur-charged with them. Some sort of fusion takes place below the threshold of consciousness and a new creative experience makes its appearance at the conscious level. It comes like a flash and during the few moments that it lasts, it gives a new insight into reality and fills the heart of the recepient with indescribable bliss and happiness. It is quite unlike any previous experience that the person has had in life and is completely satisfying in its nature. It is like the emergence of an entirely new entity in the form of water out of the chemical combination of oxygen and hydrogen. This spiritual illumination is after all an experience and, as such, capable of different interpretations. This explains why even among the mystics there prevail different philosophical doctrines, such as the advaita, Viśiṣṭa-advaita, dvaita and other philosophical doctrines.

Concentration exercises, besides in some cases leading to spiritual realisation, bring about a harmony in the body, mind and spirit of an individual. He ceases to be influenced by unconscious forces of mind, leading to all sorts of undesirable reactions. He attains self-awareness and so gradually achieves mastery over his life. This is much more than any amount of psychological treatment on modern lines

can give us. According to Indian psychology, our unconscious not only consists of long forgotten memories of this life but also of tendencies (vāsanās) brought over as the effects of our actions in previous lives. These vāsanās give rise, on the conscious plane, to inexplicable emotions, desires and actions when the individual comes in contact with sense objects. Various desires are aroused and the individual sets about satisfying them. This lays the foundation of fresh karmas (tendencies) which are carried forward to the next life and so on. The solution which the *Gītā* proposes is that the individual should direct the energy of these vāsanās to the performance of his prescribed duties in a spirit of sacrifice. In that way no fresh karmas are formed and the energy of the old karmas is worked out in the performance of disinterested actions We shall have more to say on this subject in the next chapter.

An equally necessary consequence is the control of mind through concentration exercises which aim at the supression of mental activities. "To 'concentrate' consists in narrowing the field of attention in a manner and for a time determined by the will. The result is that the mind becomes steady like the flame of an oil lamp in the absence of the wind. Emotionally speaking, concentration results in a state of quiet calm, because one has withdrawn for the time being from every thing which can cause turmoil."*

*Conze. Buddhism p. 100.

The words concentration and meditation are mostly used in the same sense. Meditation is a higher stage of concentration, when distraction from extraneous thoughts is reduced to a minimum, and there is more or less a continuous state of absorption. Samādhi or trance is a still higher stage in which the subject is lost in the contemplation of the object. Contemplation is another word which is also sometimes used in this sense.

It is really a mighty achievement to acquire mastery over one's mind so that thoughts appear only if one desires to have them. Ordinarily the mind of a so-called normal person is a chaos of ideas, emotions, desires and images over which he has no control. They come like unwelcome visitors and rob him of peace of mind. The unconscious tendencies usually push forward into our conscious mind, all sorts of ideas and impulses clamouring for attention from the helpless ego. If we can keep these intruders out whenever we like; they would lose their potency to give rise to all kinds of binding actions and leave us the master of our own selves. When the mind is emptied of its contents, a great peace descends upon a person. The *Gītā* prescribes to us to make our mind free of all unwanted intruding ideas and fill it with the idea of the Supreme self. Much of the sixth chapter is devoted to the elucidation of the method of concentration or what is called Dhyāna Yoga. In the *Gītā* the method is described briefly as follows :—

"The spiritual aspirant is advised to select a

comfortable seat in a solitary place which is free from disturbance. He should daily practise concentration by fixing his mind on the Supreme self at any one point such as the tip of his nose or the space between the two eye-brows, with the workings of the mind and the senses completely under restraint. Holding the body, head and neck, straight and unmoved, he should concentrate his mind on the Supreme self alone. The mind of such a Yogī, completely restrained and abstracted from all mental activities, becomes like an unflickering light in a windless place. Whenever the mind tends to wander, it should be pulled back and fixed again on the Supreme self. When, as the result of concentration carried on for a long time, the mind becomes steady and fixed on one point, the yogī attains to a state of bliss and infinite happiness. He never swerves from truth nor is he ever perturbed by any amount of suffering. He looks alike on all beings, sees the Supreme self abiding in all things and all things abiding in the Supreme self. Regarding all beings as one with God and looking upon friends and enemies, relatives and well-wishers, the righteous and evil-minded, the lump of gold and a piece of clay in an equal manner, he perpetually abides in the great Self. A yogī is moderate in his diet and recreation and has regular hours of sleep. One who eats too much or too little, or is given to too much sleep, or who sleeps very little, is not fit for Yogic discipline. (VI. 8-32). In verses 27 and 28, Chapter V, the need of keeping even and steady, the incoming and outgoing breath is also

referred to as a necessary adjunct of concentration exercises.

The various parts of the concentration discipline, briefly alluded to above, may be described in a more detailed manner as follows:—

1. The student of Yogic discipline should select a quiet place in a separate part of the house, and seating himself comfortably in an upright position, should daily, at fixed hours, practise concentration. Two times are generally prescribed for meditation, once in the morning and again in the evening. If he cannot afford to sit for meditation twice in the day, he should, on-no account, fail to practise concentration at least once a day. What-ever time he selects, he should stick to it in his daily practice. Beginning with 15 or 20 minutes, he can in course of time carry on the exercise for an hour each time. Later on when he has made headway in it, he will feel a desire to go on with it for two hours or even more without experiencing any exhausting effects. In no case, however, is he to prolong his meditation, if he feels tired or physically depressed in any way. If, for any reason, he feels unable to sit up he may lie down and meditate. This should happen only when sitting is not easily possible. When one is physically ill, or very much tired or has a pain in any part of the body, regular meditation may not be done, but one may repeat the name of God with great benefit to himself.

2. As soon as one sits down for meditation, all sorts of ideas, images and sensations from the body and

from outside begin to appear before the mind. One may begin with watching the breathing movements. Watch the breath going out and coming in for some time, till it becomes rhythmic, even and mechanical. No effort is to be made to restrain it or interfere with it in any way. The rhythmic utterance of Om or any other single syllable along with the taking in or throwing out of breath proves very helpful and may therefore be added to the breathing cycle.

One should, on no account, take to prāṇāyāma exercises unless there is a competent teacher to guide him. Nor are they at all necessary as far as the practice of concentration is concerned. The rhythmic and even breath is all that is needed.

3. The next thing to do is to withdraw the mind from all kinds of intruding ideas and sensations. In the beginning, one may simply observe the thoughts as they arise one after the other. He is to watch like a disinterested spectator, the continuous procession of ideas as they pass through his mind. He should have the awareness, all the time, that he is observing his mental processes. When a thought arises in mind he may say to himself, 'now this thought has arisen' and when the next thought arises, he may similarly note that the first thought has gone and the second thought has now come. Watch each thought as it arises from a spectator's point of view. Very often you will completely forget yourself and be carried away by the passing thoughts. When this happens, try to bring yourself back to the position of

an observer. The chief point is that instead of letting the thoughts run on, as it happens in a state of reverie, you are to observe the thoughts as separate from one another, noting carefully the rise and fall of one thought, and then the beginning and end of the next thought and so on. It will be found after days of practice that the thoughts are not really continuous as they appear to be, but are separated from each other by an interval or a gap in which the mind is completely blank or vacant. The disciple should make an effort to prolong this state of emptiness as far as he can. If he succeeds in this endeavour, it will be an indication that he is making a progress in meditation.

When one's mind is empty and a thought appears to be arising, one may just say to it, 'no, thank you, I do not want you now' and mildly pushing it out return to the vacant state. When another thought comes it may be similarly dealt with, repeating, whenever necessary, to yourself that you are experiencing silence, calm or a state of emptiness (Śūnya). No violent effort should be made in order to keep out thoughts. The whole process should be gradual and gentle. One should not, at all, become impatient, if there is no perceptible success for some time. The practice, in itself, when carried in a relaxed and tranquil state of mind has a great calming effect. It should also be borne in mind that concentration exercises, though important, are not the whole of religious discipline. Other elements, some of which

have already been described and some others we shall take up subsequently, are equally necessary. These include, among other things, cultivating the spirit of non-attachment to worldly things, and love and charity for all living beings.

When a thought occurs repeatedly and seems to be charged with emotion, one should face it and see through all its implications. One may remind oneself that however important a thing may appear for the time being, its importance is very much limited when looked at from a wider point of view. So many things happened in the past which appeared highly important at that time. They have no importance now. What appears important now will very soon become an insignificant thing. In the cycle of changes, things gain importance for a time and then lose it, giving place to newer things. This sobering thought will help to keep every idea in its place, and prevent it from assuming an undue importance for our consciousness.

Another method of meditation has been expounded by the late Ramana Maharshi of Tiruvannamalai in South India. One should, according to him, start with the question 'who am I' and eliminating, one after another, the various adjuncts of the self arrive at the notion of pure consciousness or the real self. He is to first convince himself intellectually that the real self is not the body nor the mind in the form of ideas, feelings, desires etc. nor is it the discriminating buddhi. The real self or consciousness is like a screen on which various sensations, ideas,

desires and volitions appear and disappear just as various pictures appear and disappear on the screen of a cinema show. The pictures are ephemeral and unreal while the screen is constant and real. When he sits in meditation and an idea arises in his mind he should ask as to whom this idea has occured. He will know that it has occured to the pure consciousness which he really is. Every time that an idea occurs, he is to think of the self to which it has occured and so gradually his mind begins to acquire a state of vacancy and freedom from all invading thoughts. "The mind becomes reduced to a state of pure consciousness and begins to shine steadily in its pure from."

The ego is lost in the pure self which is similar or identical in all beings. This state of egolessness, as long as it lasts, is a highly peaceful experience, and brings about, in course of time, a great transformation of the individual.

4. The usual method of concentration (to which the *Bhagawad Gītā* refers) is that of focussing the mind upon some object such as a flower, a sacred text or the picture of a great religious teacher such as the Buddha, Kṛṣṇa, Christ or any other teacher according to the religious belief of the person concerned, or any other convenient object. One may concentrate on the image of an object instead. In course of time, as the practice of concentration is continued, the picture or image loses its perceptible qualities and is mentally reduced to a mere point. It is not advisible if one is

concentrating on an object, to keep the eyes open and staring all the time. One need not put strain on the eyes by keeping them open unnecessarily. One should look at the object in a natural manner. When a strain is felt, the eyes should be closed for a minute and the object visualised mentally. When the image of the object begins to grow faint, one may open the eyes and gaze at the object again and again, till he can retain the image clearly during the course of concentration with the eyes closed. Sometimes, concentration is practiced upon certain parts of the body, such as, the tip of the nose, the point between the eye-brows, the navel or the heart. This is mostly done by keeping the image of the particular part of the body before one's mind. One may focus one's attention on the printed or written "OM" or any other sacred syllable, and then after a time close the eyes and visualize it mentally, locating it, if he likes, between the eye brows. The word "OM" whether mentally repeated or gazed at on a piece of paper and later on visually imagined, is the most approved object for concentration.

A person may choose any congenial object for concentration. He should, however, as far as possible stick to the object that he has chosen. Ultimately the aim should be to concentrate on the image of the object on which one begins to focus one's mind with eyes open. But in the end, even the image must give way to mental stillness. Sometimes the image, after a prolonged period of concentration may become

hallucinatingly real. That would be a sign of incomplete contemplation. "Intense concentration on any image (even if the image be a sacred symbol) ......is always concentration on some thing produced by one's own mind." Highest contemplation is not possible unless the intense image experience gives way to a condition of imagelessness or a state of complete non-attachment to all things including the image itself whether visual or auditory.

Sometimes, after prolonged period of concentration, certain unusual psycho-physical results may appear, the most common being visions and sounds. Sometimes there is an experience of intense heat. It should not mislead a person into thinking that he had achieved spiritual realization.

The simplest and most widely practised form of concentration which may be safely recommended, especially for persons who can easily have the images of verbal sounds, consists in the mental repetition of the divine name. In India, the most favoured word used for repetition is ŌM. In some circles, Rāma or some other similar word or even a phrase is substituted for mental repetition. The repetition of a single syllable is generally preferred to that of a phrase. In mentally repeating the syllable Om, the two letters are some times separated and repeated at a certain uniform pitch, synchronising them with the incoming and out-going breath. By focussing attention upon a certain point or upon an image for a considerable length of time, a condition of mental abstraction supervenes. The

same thing happens as the result of mentally repeating a word or syllable carried over a long period day after day. The mental utterance drops off and a state of abstraction supervenes with resulting peace and calm. Along with this, there may emerge in some cases, what may be called the intuitive insight of higher consciousness.

The intuitive insight is also an experience i. e. a manifestation of the Divine; though it is a higher order of manifestation and a most blissful and revealing one. What this experience is can be gathered, to some extent, from the utterances of mystics. We have referred to some of these utterances in a previous chapter.

The intuitive insight may not be attained by most aspirants, but ineffable peace and tranquillity do result from the daily practice of spiritual exercises. This, in itself, is a very great gain. Peace is a very rare commodity, indeed. He is really a great man who can remain calm and peaceful when a storm is raging all about him, without losing, in any way, his efficiency and the capacity to play his part in the drama of the world. Further, we all know what an important role the habit of concentration plays in the life of man. Men who have made a lasting contribution to the culture of mankind, in the domain of science, philosophy, art, and invention-geniuses in any field of human endeavour—have been characterised with great powers of concentration. Ordinarily, concentrated attention works within a narrow field, shifting from

one part to the other. However narrow the field of thought, it is still broad enough for the attention to shift to various points within that narrow field. When, however, the object of concentration is reduced to a point, and one acquires the ability to keep his attention focussed upon that point for any length of time, without any exertion or strain, the power of concentration becomes tremendous. Such a person can achieve wonderful results in whatever activity he chooses to engage himself.

We thus find that the subjects for meditation may be of three kinds. One may meditate on the process of thought, on an object of thought or on the thinking self and its essence. In the first kind of meditation, the thoughts are watched, as they rise and fall, in an impartial manner, without giving any importance or support to any of them. Without such support, no thought can remain in the mind for long. Ultimately the thoughts become fewer and fewer and the interval between one thought and another goes on becoming longer and longer. It is an experience of a state of pure consciousness which is also called a state of vacancy or emptiness.

Secondly any desirable object may be selected for meditation, but for the yogi of the *Gītā* the object for meditation is the omniscient, omnipotent and all pervading Lord, meditation may be done by means of the syllable Om or any other symbol or form dear to the yogi. The form is to be understood as a mere symbol of the Supreme who is Infinite consciousness

and bliss. The yogi offers all that he has and is, at the feet of his Lord.

In the the third place, one may meditate on the thinking subject and its essence. It consists in enquiring, into "what am I" again and again. According to the *Gītā* the Lord is 'The Self in every living thing.' This method is prescribed in the Upanishads and in modern times by the Late Mahrishi Raman of South India.

Practice (Abhyāsa) and Non-Attachment (Vairāgya)

After hearing the great discourse of Kṛṣṇa on the Yoga of mind-control, Arjuna points out the difficulty involved in the practice of concentration. The mind is very fickle and impetuous and is as difficult to control as the wind. In his answer, Śri Kṛṣṇa refers to two great qualities with the help of which one can bring one's mind under control. "Without doubt, O mighty armed, the mind is fickle and difficult to restrain. Still it can be controlled, O' son of Kunti, by constant practice and non-attachment." (VI. 35). Regular practice and non-attachment to the things of the world are the two potent means by which mind can be brought under control.

Abhyāsa—(Daily Practice). No proficiency can be gained in any art or science unless one works at it for a long time with assiduity and perseverance. In order to become a great painter, a great musician, a great mathematician or a great scientist or to acquire

mastery and skill in any language or craft one should patiently and unswervingly devote oneself to the particular line of one's choice for a number of years. Abhyāsa or constant practice is no less necessary in order to learn the art of mind-control. In fact it is doubly so as it involves navigating in unknown and difficult seas. The novice has seldom any idea of the spiritual goal to which he hitches his wagon. It is his faith in what he has read in books of yoga or what he has heard from his spiritual teacher that takes him to the pursuit of yoga. He is likely to be disheartened when he finds himself making no progress especially at the initial stage. If he is doing spiritual exercises under the direct guidance of a teacher or if the teacher is easily accessible whenever he feels depressed or disinclined to continue, it will be easy for him to carry on inspite of various obstacles and discouragements. But if a person is doing spiritual exercises on his own account, and feels disheartened, there is nothing for him but to remind himself that like all great achievements, perfection in spiritual meditation also requires a long period of practice and so one must carry on inspite of all obstacles. It is, however, essential that every person should work under the guidance of a competent teacher even though the latter might be living at a different place. He should meet him occasionally or if he cannot meet him, he should get his advice through correspondence by referring to him his difficulties every now and then.

One should therefore be always prepared to make a fresh start every day till the exercise of meditation takes the form of a habit. It is no use to fret and fume at one's failings. One should have the patience to bear one's faults and shortcomings in the same way as one should bear the faults and shortcomings of one's neighbours. Dejection of mind is a common fault. We are likely to feel dejected when no progress is perceptibly made for the time being. That is the time when we are to pull ourselves up. If we can keep on the practice when everything appears dark and uncertain, it will not be long before we shall see light again. If the practice of meditation is continued long enough with regularity, one begins to experience a strange feeling of calm and peace, filling his soul during meditational hours and even afterwards. When this stage is reached, meditation no longer remains an irksome or disagreeable task. One is then led on, by the momentum of his own pleasant experience, to the daily practice of spiritual exercises, The feeling grows that he can never have enough of them and so they become the business of the whole life time.

Non-Attachment—(Vairāgya)—It is not without reason that vairāgya has been described by Śrī Kṛṣṇa as an essential condition for success in concentration. Concentration exercises do not bear any fruit unless we cultivate, at the same time, the attitude of non-attachment to the things of the world. When we sit down for meditation, various ideas begin to

distract our mind from the object of meditation. These ideas force themselves into our consciousness because there is always some sort of emotional attachment with the objects represented by the ideas. As our attachment to things and persons gradually drops away, our minds become tranquil, and meditation becomes easy, smooth, and free from distractions.

As a mystic writer St. John of the Cross puts it, "The soul that is attached to anything, however much good there may be in it, will not arrive at the liberty of divine union. For whether it be a strong wire rope or a slender, delicate thread that holds the bird, it matters not, if it really holds it fast; for until the cord is broken, the bird cannot fly."* It is only when we feel the unsatisfactory nature of worldly life, that we begin to aspire for the open freedom of spiritual life.

It is true that as long as we find worldly life full of enchantment and joy, we shall have no desire to turn to the beauties of spirituality. Usually when a person grows old and the earthly joys begin to grow dim, that he comes to realise the unsatisfactory nature of the pleasures of the flesh. It should be a time of serious reflection on ultimate values of life. Most of the people have no capacity for serious reflection and so, inspite of recurring disillusionment, they turn to the same old sources of satisfaction again and again.

People, as a rule, devote themselves to the pursuit of pleasure and of wealth, fame, power and prestige.

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*Aldous Huxley. Perennial Philosophy, pp. 122.

Of these, the craving for power and prestige is the most powerful and lasts the longest. With the approach of old age, a person may lose zest in pleasures of the senses on account of the decline of bodily strength. When one is no longer physically active, the desire for fame may also subside, but the appetite for power may continue to manifest itself inspite of old age and sickness, specially if a person happens to possess all the advantages of wealth and social position. There is not the slightest doubt that power is the most corrupting influence in the world. The craving for power, fame or sense pleasures make a man quite unfit for the pursuit of higher spiritual life. We have to constantly realize the transitory and empty nature of all material objects of life, in order to break our attachment to them and make ourselves really free. How small is our life as compared to the unimaginable vastness of time that has already elapsed and the time that is still to follow ! There is nothing permanent in this impermanent world of ours. It is childish to lose ourselves in the empty and fruitless pursuits of life.

The pursuit of higher values such as knowledge, art, literature, goodness and social justice is nobler than the pursuit of material values such as pleasure, fame and power. But even culture may be over-emphasized to the detriment of spiritual life. When art, literature and social activities become ends in themselves and are separated from spiritual aims; when scientific knowledge is pursued for its own sake,

without understanding its place in the totality of things or its relation to God, the basic reality of this ever-changing world, the roots of egoism remain as strong as ever. Attachment to the objects of cultural value, if pursued exclusively, equally keeps a man away from union with the Divine.

Attachment is built up, from the age of childhood, to things which give enjoyment. When the child becomes a youth, old attachments give place to new attachments. He begins to desire wealth, comfort, good name, love and power. Some of these desires persist throughout life, but new desires may be added with the passing of years. All cravings are tainted with a desire for the perpetuation of pleasureable experiences. We identify ourselves with things and persons that give us joy. We regard them as our exclusive property from which we try to exclude other people. Thus, an undue sense of possessiveness takes hold of us. Even our love takes the form of possessive love. It is a great obstacle in the path of spiritual realization.

Though it is not generally recognized, aversion to things is also a source of attachment and thus it may become as potent a cause of distraction as craving for enjoyable experiences. When we are angry with a person or when we hate him, we unknowingly create bonds of attachment with him. We cannot remain indifferent to him. We think of him again and again, and remember the injury which we received from him. The mere memory of it rouses our anger and

the desire to retaliate. Fear and anxiety, like anger, keep us tied to certain situations and persons. We think of them again and again. We cannot forget them, however, much we may wish to do so. When, therefore, the *Gītā* speaks of Vairāgya, it is intended to convey that we are to rise as much above anger, hate, fear and anxiety as above the craving for things and persons. The ideal of non-attachment is conveyed to us in the concept of wīta-rāga-bhaya-krodha. i. e. one who has risen above desire, fear, and anger. Such a person alone deserves te be called a non-attached Yogi.

We, thus, find that the mental attitude of Vairāgya or non-attachment consists in being free from the taints of possessiveness and greed, desire for sensual pleasure, name and fame and being free from anger and fear. It should be clearly realized that anger, and fear are intimately related to desire. It is only when some one obstructs the satisfaction of our desire or when a particular situation makes it difficult for our desire to be fulfilled, that anger, fear and anxiety take their rise. Really, desire on the one hand, and anger and fear on the other, form the obverse and reverse of the same coin.

It is worth noting that non-attachment represents a mental attitude and not the external form which it may assume. It is not necessary to don the ochre-coloured robe of a sanyāsi or to give up the material things and take to a life of renunciation in order to become a non-attached person. A person,

like Janaka of ancient fame may lead a life of non-attachment even while living the life of regal pomp and splendour. Another person, though living the life of a recluse may still hanker after worldly joys and comforts. We may take delight in the beautiful and enjoyable aspects of existence, the pleasant and beautiful things about us. But when we are called away from them, we should be able to leave them without any pang or sorrow. The real sting lies in the bonds of attachment which we create with the pleasure-giving things of the world. If a person "has any greed, desire, demand, claim for possession or enjoyment, any anxiety, grief, anger or vexation when denied or deprived, he is not free in spirit and his use of the things he possesses is contrary to the spirit of the Sādhanā. Even if he is free in spirit, he will not be fit for possession, if he has not learnt to use things not for himself but for the Divine will, as an instrument, with the right knowledge and action in the use, for the proper equipment of a life lived not for oneself but for and in the divine". (Śrī Aurobindo) This is the spirit in which one is to make use of one's possessions whether material or cultural. Our attitude towards our children and dear ones should not be one of possessiveness but of tender affection and desire for their welfare. We have learnt the value of love and affection through them and so we are to be thankful to them for these higher joys. We are to extend the bounds of love to include all fellow human-beings as far as possible. Dispassion or non-attachment

does not mean that we should empty ourselves of all love and tender feelings and make ourselves hard and unfeeling like a stone. Mrs. Annie Besant says in this connection :—

"There is a rough and ready way of quickly bringing about dispassion. Some say to you : 'Kill out all love and affection, harden your hearts, become cold to all around you, desert your wife and children, your father and mother, and fly to the jungle, put a wall between yourself and all objects of desire ; then dispassion will be yours.' It is true that it is comparatively easy to acquire dispassion in that way. But by that you kill more than desire ... you kill love, and not only desire ... love is the desire of the separated self for union with all other separated selves. Dispassion is the non-attraction to matter—a very different thing. You must guard love—for it is the self of the self. In your anxiety to acquire dispassion do not kill out love. Love is the life in every one of us, separated selves. It draws every separated self to the other self. Each one of us is a part of the mighty whole. Efface desire as regards the vehicles that clothe the self, but do not efface love, that never-dying force that draws self to self. Many people in throwing out love only throw themselves back, becoming less human, not superhuman, by their mistaken attempts. It is by and through human ties of love and sympathy that the self unfolds. Always

mistrust the teacher who tells you to kill out love, to be indifferent to human affections."[1]

We can love people and we can enjoy the beautiful things of the world without being attached to them. If a person has learnt this art, he has really learnt the secret of a truly happy life.

Some persons are born with a religious bent of mind. The things of the world do not attract them and they are soon fed up with worldly life and its pleasures. Such people are born saints and mystics. This happened with Guatama Buddha, Dayānanda, Rāma Kṛṣṇa Parmahansa, St. Paul and a host of other spiritually-minded people. Most of us, however, cannot get out of the bonds of temptation. We have no conception of higher life and so we continue in the established routine without any desire for change. There are many others who realise the unsatisfactory nature of material ends but do not find it easy to attain to a detached state of mind. In their case, the constant study of religious books, the company of saintly people and the general sense of unsatisfactoriness with worldly life may gradually make them more and more detached in mind and spirit. The frequent contemplation of the transitory nature of the world and its things proves greatly helpful. The following lines from Omar Khayam present this aspect of life most beautifully :—

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1. Quoted by D. S. Sharma. The Renaissance of Hinduism p. 215.

"How vain to wish within this Sarai (inn) here,
A century or two, a thousand years
Of triumph. Down in dust no stone will show,
Ah, here a king, Ah, lies a begger there ;
Ah, where the house, which held its head so high,
The tower with the heaven which did vie,
A lonely dove sits brooding over their fate,
Ah, where the glory, where ? he seems to sigh."

Nachiketā in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad,* realized at a tender age, the futility of seeking satisfaction in the ephemeral objects of the world, and so he refused to be led away from his spiritual quest by the offer of a long life along with unbounded wealth, lovely women, beautiful children and all other things which are supposed to make life happy and prosperous. Even long life must end and then on one's death bed, the idea that one has enjoyed all the pleasures of life would give no consolation what-so-ever to the departing soul or assuage, in any way, the remorse felt for an ill-spent life.

Non-attachment does not require us to ignore desires and emotions but to look upon them as extraneous to ourselves. K. T. Bahanon in his book on Yoga writes, "Every thing must be consciously appraised from a detached point of view, never allowing the subject and the experience from becoming one. It is possible to have an emotion and yet to be neither in it nor of it. Only because we feel that we have some thing to lose or gain if a certain situation develops one way or another, do we become

identified with the emotion and this develops into a passion...by a conscious effort of the will, we should be able to detach ourselves from emotional experiences."

In the beginning of chapter 15 in the *Bhagawad Gītā*, we are asked to cut-down the aśwattha tree (i. e. Attachment to the world of objects) by the strong weapon of dis-passion. This Aśwattha tree (the tree of creation) is beginningless and endless. The branches of this tree (the various species of plants and animals) are said to be nourished by the three guṇas, and which, therefore, experience all kinds of sense-enjoyment leading to the bondage of the soul in this mortal world. This tree of creation has its roots in the Primal being and is eternal. Unless we detach ourselves from worldly pleasures as well as from the more subtle heavenly joys, obtained by sacrificial rites as enjoined in the Vedas (spoken of as Chhandas or leaves of the Aśwatth tree) we shall not be able to take ourselves seriously to the task of spiritual realisation. Non-attachment to the transient joys of life in this world or in heaven is the first requisite for undertaking steps towards the attainment of spiritual wisdom.

The last twenty verses of chapter 2 very clearly bring out the importance of non-attachment in the life of a spiritual seeker. Some of the verses are as follows :—"A person of stable understanding abandons all cravings of the mind and finds his highest satisfaction in the self through (the joys born of) the self.

He remains unperturbed in sorrow and is not

related by joy. He always remains above passion, fear and anger.

He is not attached to things of the world and is not thrown off his balance by pleasant and unpleasant experiences.

The wandering senses deprive a person of his power of discrimination just as wind carries away a floating barge. One should, therefore, always keep his senses under restraint.

What the wise man regards as night is looked upon as day by the worldly man and in matters in which the wise man keeps awake, the man of the world remains fast asleep.

As waters entering into the calm ocean do not cause any disturbance in it, similarly, the person in whom the temptations and enjoyments of the world cause no disturbance attains to peace."

Samatā (Even-Mindedness)— Spiritual discipline is not complete without the spirit of equality or even-mindedness. The yogi remains perfectly tranquil in the midst of heat and cold, pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour. He looks upon a sod of earth, a stone and gold as alike. He thinks alike of well-wishers, friends, enemies, of those who are indifferent to him and those who are related to him. He treats equally the dear ones and the hateful ones, saints and sinners. (VI. 8,9).

We are elated when good fortune comes to us and are depressed with ill-fortune. A Yogi would

maintain his equanimity under all circumstances, in good fortune and ill-fortune, in victory and defeat, in honour and dishonour, in happiness and sorrow, in fame and obloquy. The harder part, however, is to treat friends and foes alike, and yet the *Gītā* lays this test upon the aspirant for Yoga.

Equality does not mean that the Yogi becomes completely unemontional like a stone or that he experiences neither love nor aversion, neither pain nor pleasure. We are definitely required to cultivate positive emotions of love, tenderness, courage, self-mastery, and purity of soul. A saint also feels physical suffering when it comes to him. He is sensitive to the joys of beauty, love and friendship. Equality demands of us to keep up our balance and self-possession in all situations of life, and not to become unduly elated when some happy event occurs in our life nor unduly depressed on the occurance of an unpleasant experience. All experiences, when they occur, are accompanied by a feeling tone either painful or pleasant. It is a natural reaction to the stimuli of circumstances. "The contacts of senses" says Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā*, "produce heat and cold, pleasure and pain. They are not permanent ; they come and go. Bear them, O' son of Kunti." "The wise person who is not affected by them, who remains the same in pleasure and pain, is alone fit for immortal life." (II. 14, 15) It means that a Yogi is not deflected from his contemplated course by the turns of fortune and circumstances.

The touches of nature produce similar bodily reactions in the Yogi and in the ordinary person, but the Yogi can endure them well and is not adversely influenced in the performance of his duties. Pain and pleasure do not deflect him from the right course of action. His actions are guided by a purpose, by considerations of right and wrong and not by those of pain and pleasure. A man of equable temperament can maintain his self-possession even in most trying circumstances and can take a detached and dispassionate view of all happenings.

Socrates presents the best illustration of a person self-possessed in the presence of great personal affliction. He is sentenced to death and cast into prison. The sentence is to be carried out after a month and in the meantime his friends and disciples are allowed to see him and hold conversation with him. A few hours before he was to drink the cup of poison, he gave a discourse to his disciples and friends on the immortality of soul in so calm and quiet a manner as if nothing was going to happen. When the cup of hemlock was brought to him, he drank it off but this fact did not interrupt his talking on great themes till death silenced him altogether.

When, during the days of his incarceration, some of his friends tried to pursuade him to escape from prison, which they could manage easily, Socrates replied, "The only question which we have to consider is, shall I be doing right or shall I be doing wrong, if I escape ? And if we find that I shall be doing wrong

then we must not take any account of death which may be the consequence of staying here, but only of doing wrong." He succeeded in convincing his friends that it would be wrong to escape from prison and so nothing more could be done. Socrates was, without doubt, a great Yogi according to the conception of *Bhagawad Gītā*.

The growth of spirituality may reach a stage when a yogi ceases to make a distinction between a friend and an enemy because all persons appear to him as embodiments of the Divine Spirit. His compassion and love embrace the whole creation in its totality. Not only men but animals as well evoke feelings of tenderness and affection in the heart of a saintly person. At this stage, even sufferings and torments are accepted in a glad spirit of resignation, along with pleasant experiences, as they both come from the Supreme Lord of creation.

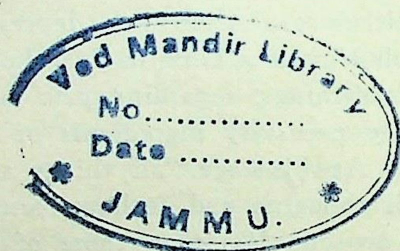
Śrī Aurobindo traces the following stages of the evolution of the sense of equality in his great book 'The Synthesis of Yoga'. The first stage is that of heroic endurance of sufferings and hardships. "Each fibre in us must be taught not to wince away from that which pains and repels and not run eagerly towards that which pleases and attracts, but rather to accept, to face, to bear and to conquer." It is the stoical attitude towards life. Whatever be the blows and rebuffs of fortune, one should not allow them to take him away from the path of virtue and dutifulness. In order to avoid having a feeling of pride in one's

superior virtue, one should always reinforce this attitude with a 'sustained sense of spiritual submission to the divine will.'

At the next stage, the attitude of stiff resistance and heroic endurance is replaced by that of calm equanimity and indifference towards all happenings. There is neither exaltation nor depression. The individual feels himself as Udāsīna or calmly superior to all contacts of things, regarding pain and pleasure as two equally necessary ingredients of the great drama of life. At this stage "all things and persons and forces, all thoughts and feelings, sensations and actions, one's own no less than those of others, are regarded from above by a spirit that remains intact and immutable and is not disturbed by those things."

And then comes the last stage of 'total self-giving to the divine'. The perfected soul takes joy and delight in all happenings, pleasant or unpleasant, in a spirit of complete surrender and glad submission. "This submission will be no longer a resigned acquiescance but a glad acceptance ; for then will be no sense of suffering or of the bearing of a burden or a cross; love and delight and the joy of self-giving will be its brilliant texture and this surrender will be not only to a divine will which we perceive and accept and obey but to a divine wisdom in the will which we recognise and a divine love in it which we feel and rapturously suffer, the wisdom and love of a supreme spirit and the self of ourselves and all, with which we can achieve a happy and perfect unity. .... Then we are

at last capable of receiving all contacts with a blissful equality because we feel in them the touch of the imperishable love and delight ; the happiness absolute that hides ever in the heart of things."*



*Synthesis of Yoga, pp. 220-222.

Chapter V

The Way of Action (Karma Mārga)

So far we have discussed the various aspects of what is known as Jñāna Mārga or the way of knowledge. We find this path to spiritual enlightenment propounded in the *Upaniṣads. Gītā* accepts this path but it does not stop there nor does it accept the view of most of the followers of the path of knowledge, namely that in order to realize the spiritual goal, one should renounce action and retire into a state of homelessness. We have discussed, in a previous chapter on Karma and sacrifice the views of the author of the *Gītā* on this important topic. Karma leaves behind it, effects in the form of vasanas or tendencies and these tendencies become the cause of the future rebirth of an individual. The cycle of births and deaths continues till the effects of one's karmas are completely eradicated. To many thinkers of pre-*Gītā* period, it appeared that the only way to uproot tendencies was to renounce action and lead a life of complete renunciation. It meant that a house-holder, howsoever noble and god-fearing he might be, could never hope to achieve salvation. Every action, good or bad, left a binding effect on the agent. A chain was no less a chain though it was made of gold. *Gītā* agrees with the view that even a good action has a binding effect upon the individual, if it is not done in

the right spirit. But it also points out, at the same time, that no human being can avoid the performance of action. One may retire into a forest but even there he must act in one way or another. The author of the *Gītā* gives a wide meaning to the term action. It includes all physical and mental activities. A person who is contemplating the pleasures of the senses is no less active than one who is actually engaged in enjoying them. On the physical plane even a mendicant must feel hungry and go about begging alms. This must go on from day to day and would be as much binding in its effects as any other form of activity.

Granting the necessity of Karma in the drama of life, the *Gītā* takes out the sting from the effects of Karma by insisting that the karma must be performed in a disinterested manner. All Karmas performed for personal or social ends should be pursued in a spirit of detachment and offered to the Lord of the play in complete self-consecration and in a spirit of dedication. It is not the act which binds the individual but the desire behind it. This is the famous doctrine of Karma Yoga which the *Gītā* propounded so clearly perhaps for the first time, in the history of Indian religion. A spiritual seeker may give a few hours to meditation and concentration exercises, but he has to devote the remaining part of the day to the performance of various duties pertaining to his position in life. The *Gītā* teaches us the art of doing this part of our work in a proper manner. We

should, therefore, in the pursuit of our spiritual goal, try to clearly understand the doctrine of disinterested action expounded in the *Gītā* as part of spiritual discipline. According to the author of the *Gītā* it is not at all necessary for any person, at any time, to renounce the world and become a mendicant. He can continue performing his allotted duties for the whole of his life with great spiritual benefit to himself, if he has mastered the secret of disinterested work, as Janak, Kṛṣṇa, and many others had done in ancient times.

The Karma Yoga of *Gītā* is very clearly expounded in the following verses.

Dwelling in Yoga, perform all thy actions, O' Dhanañjya (Arjuna), casting off attachment and being even-minded in success and failure. Such even-mindedness is called Yoga.

Action (done with attachment) is far inferior to the Yoga of even-mindedness (Buddhi Yoga as explained in the previous verse). Seek thy refuge therefore, in this attitude of mind. Pitiable is the condition of those who hanker after the fruits of their actions.

He who has a disciplined mind overcomes, even here, the effects of good and bad deeds alike. Therefore, apply thyself to Yoga. Yoga consists in the skill of doing one's act in the right manner.

The wise who have learnt the art of Buddhi Yoga, giving up the fruits of their actions. become free from

the bonds of birth and attain the state of bliss" (II. 48 to 51).

Again —

"When a man puts away all desires of the heart, and finds satisfaction, through the self, in the self alone, then he is said to be stable-minded.

He whose heart is not perturbed by calamities, nor has any hankering for pleasures and is free from passion, fear and anger,—such a person is called a sage of stable mind.

He who is free from attachment at all times, and does not feel unduly elated by agreeable experiences, nor does become depressed by disagreeable experience, is a stable minded person." (II. 55-57).

What is meant by saying that a person should remain indifferent to the fruits of his actions ? It does not mean that the Yogi should act without any end in view. Before embarking upon any action, we have to give a careful thought to what we intend to do, the kind of action that would be necessary, and the various means which we shall have to use in order to realize a particular end demanded by the situation in which we act. A wise man would give due consideration to all these factors. Having given his fullest attention to the details of the action he would not be worried in any way by the actual consequences which follow the action. He would not become unduly elated if he meets with success nor would he be depressed by failure. He has done all that he could

do. He is now quite content with whatever result nature rewards his efforts. His action may bring success, honour, fame or it may result in failure, bad name and dishonour ; to a yogi it makes no difference whatsoever. He is happy with the way in which he has done his work and does not crave for the various objects which ordinary men are so anxious to obtain. The *Gīta*, therefore, says that the mental attitude of evenmindedness (Buddhi Yoga) or the spirit in which an action is done, is a most important factor in the performance of the action and therefore a person should always be mindful of the spirit which moves him to act.

According to Goethe, an eminent German thinker, a man should not expect from life happiness or to realize the results of his activities. He is to engage himself for the realization of good, impelled as it were, by inner necessity. "Whoever desires to be active must resemble that unreasonable sower in the parable who casts the seed without worrying as to how large the harvest will be nor where it will come up." Again in a letter written to one of his friends in 1782, he says, "All I can assure you is that in the midst of happiness I live in a perpetual state of renunciation and that each day, with all my troubles and works, I see that it is not my will that is done but the will of a higher power whose thoughts are not my thoughts."

In the verses given above, the author of the *Gītā* has described Yoga (Buddhi Yoga) in two different ways. According to the first description, to remain

even-minded in success and failure (and other pairs of opposites) is Yoga. Soon after yoga is described as skill in doing one's acts and that skill consists in doing them in an evenminded and disinterested way i.e. doing them because the situation demands it and not because one hopes to get pleasure or honour or wealth or any other similar personal end from them. Ultimately the two descriptions mean the same thing. This is what *Gītā* means by desireless action, i.e. an action done not from the egoistic but from the universalistic point of view. Gradually, as the spiritual ardour develops, a person may learn to look upon himself as a part of the whole so that even the satisfaction of his personal wants takes on a universal colouring. He eats and sleeps and does other personal acts because the universal spirit within and without, demands it of him. At the highest stage, he becomes as it were a mere vehicle of universal life.

A spiritual seeker, however, should not, right in the beginning, put an undue strain upon his immature nature. He should be more concerned with the pursuit of higher things in life than with the negative task of suppressing the demands of his lower self. These demands of the lower self, according to the author of the *Gītā* are so headstrong and insistent that any direct attack upon them is liable to confound the efforts of even a wise person (II. 60) and the author himself suggests that all craving for sensual gratification ceases only when 'one has the vision of the Highest.' (II. 59) When we have filled our mind

with higher things of life, lower things automatically drop away in course of time. One should not therefore be impatient with the rate at which one is progressing towards the spiritual goal.

Even what we call the lower self is a part of ourselves. It is the initial stage of the growing process and therefore not sinful in any way. The *Gītā* is not against the enjoyment of pleasures of life if it can be done without violating the principle of righteousness. (Dharmaviruddha Kāma) It is however distinctly stated that the personal desires are to be subordinated to the welfare of social whole "The good who eat what is left from the sacrifice, are released from all sins but the unrighteous ones who prepare food for themselves alone incur a great sin" (III. 13). The person who enjoys the gifts of life without giving any thing in return is spoken of as a thief (III. 12). The world presents to us a spectacle of interdependence of beings. We all live upon the toil of one another, "there is a constant interchange between human life and world life. He who works for himself lives in vain". Most of us are not aware of the sacrifices which we are all making for one another. These sacrifices are unconsciously made as a consequence of social arrangements. It is necessary, in the interest of spiritual welfare, to bring the sacrificial spirit on the conscious plane. A man should consciously dedicate his daily work, whatever it may be, at the altar of the Universal being. Work done in this spirit becomes a hallowed thing.

The central principal of Niṣkāma Karma, as it must be clear by now, is that we should perform our actions without attachment to their consequences or fruits. The action itself should arise out of the needs of immediate situation. We have to weigh carefully various alternatives suggested to our mind, decide about the best course to follow in order to solve the problem and then set about doing it. This is all quite in order, but as a rule, we are not satisfied merely with the right performance of the act. We hanker after certain results from the act. The desired fruit may take the form of internal pleasure or pride in achieving success, or reward may be sought in the form of wealth, position, good name, honour, or any other vital satisfaction. The *Gītā* wants us to disconnect the action from all these generally sought-after consequences. The action should be done well ; the rest of the things should not matter at all. Yoga consists in the skill to do our acts well. One who has learnt to dissociate action from the craving for various kinds of fruits as mentioned above, is a true Yogi, according to the *Gītā*. This is what is meant by Niṣkāma Karma or Karma done without any desire for fruit.

We are all well aware that it is only the doing of an act which may be said to be under our control. The resulting consequences depend upon factors which are mostly independent of our will. We cannot be certain that we shall meet with success in achieving the goal of our action, not to speak of honour, social

praise, or monetary gain that we also so often hanker after. We not only want to achieve success, but we also want to be honoured and praised and, if possible, to obtain some financial benefit out of the venture. These things have nothing to do with the beauty or skilfulness of the action itself. It is not only that we may not obtain these highly prized objectives of success, honour, fame and wealth; we may have to put up, instead, with failure, dishonour, financial loss and disrepute. All these are a part of the game of life. These values which we crave so ardently tittilate us for a while, but they have no abiding worth. They are short-lived, and perish like all other perishable things. Wisdom therefore requires of us to rise above both kinds of fruits; agreeable and disagreeable, while performing the tasks of life. This is the secret of desireless action which the *Gītā* places before us and which every spiritual seeker has to thoroughly understand and make the guiding rule of his life.

But the *Gītā* is not content with forced and unwilling submission to the will of God or with cultivating heroic and proud indifference to the buffets of misfortunes and hardships. It insists on a complete transformation of will so that the so-called goods and ills of life lose their fascination and fearfulness respectively, and we can go on with our life work without being hampered by the one or the other. There can be no Karma Yoga without the spirit of Samatā or equal-mindedness in the face of all events and

happennings. Śrī Aurobindo expresses the idea in his Synthesis of Yoga as follows :—

"If good fortune and ill fortune, if respect and insult, if reputation and obloquy, if victory and defeat, if pleasant event and sorrow-ful event leave us not only un-shaken but un-touched, free in the emotions, free in the nervous reactions, free in the mental views, not responding with the least disturbance or vibration in any spot of the nature, than we have the absolute liberation to which the *Gītā* points us, but not otherwise. The tiniest reaction is a proof that the discipline is imperfect and that some part of our nature accepts ignorance and bondage as its law and clings still to the old nature." Of course, this kind of equality cannot be possessed all atonce. We have to gradually ascend to this level of calm and unforced equality of mind but there is no doubt that this is the ideal of Niṣkāma Karma which the *Gītā* places before us i. e. the ideal of complete indifference to actual fruits of our action in their pleasant and unpleasant forms.

Is Desireless Action Possible ? On the ordinary human plane, action always proceeds from some desire or the other. It is only the reflex, habitual or automatic activies which may be described as unmotived or desireless. A person, at one time, may be in a state of rest or relaxation. All of a sudden a desire appears like a ripple on the surface of his mind. If it is of a mild and ineffective nature, it passes away without inducing the person to act, but if it is fairly

strong and completely engrosses the mind it produces agitation and restlessness so that the individual can no longer remain in a state of restful inactivity. Some sort of action is called for and the person sets about doing the requisite action. This is the general pattern which characterises all action. An action, as a rule, is preceded by a desire or a motive.

The desire may take various forms. One may desire the sensual gratification of one's body or the pursuit of honour, victory, riches or power ; one may desire to realise the well-being of one's children, to serve one's friends or the poor, the needy and the sick ; to take part in political, social or cultural movements. ; one may be a lover of knowledge and beauty and so may desire to acquire knowledge of science and philosophy or to shine as a master in any of the fine arts. Starting from a few basic natural desires such as, hunger, sex, self-assertion, desire for social approval, and so on, one acquires, in course of time, on the basis of these natural drives, an indefinite number of secondary desires of all sorts. The craving for self-assertion or superiority, for instance, may lead a person to desire to become a speaker, a writer, a wrestler, an explorer and so on. Curiosity may similarly create a desire for acquiring knowledge of one science or the other. This is the way in which a few basic natural cravings gradually assume an indefinite number of forms.

Desires may be good or bad. The same craving for self-assertion which creats in one person a desire

to become a great general or a great politician may produce in another person, on account of undesirable social influences, a desire to become a dacoit, a gambler, a swindler and so on. The aim of moral education is to divert the energy of an individual in the direction of good desires. "The stream of desires," says the author of Yoga Vāsiṣṭha, "flows along two courses, good and bad ; through strong efforts, it should be directed along the good course." Again, "when the mind is bent upon evil desires, O' mightiest of the heroes, thou shouldst keep it engaged in good and holy desires through effort of will."

When the will of a person is acted upon by noble motives or desires, it gives rise to morally commendable actions. People of great moral worth do not allow themselves to be unduly influenced by the desire for honour, fame, power or gain but are rather actuated to action by a sense of duty. Their actions are self-less and are performed without any desire for personal gain. Even in their case, the element of desire is present, though this desire is directed towards acting according to the dictates of duty.

The question arises ; is it possible to perform an action which is absolutely unmotived and desireless ? Can any act be performed, even by a Yogi of the highest spiritual attainment, without an initial desire to perform that particular act, specially if it happens to be a planned and complex kind of action. Sometimes an action is inspired by an emotion and is executed immediately. We see a child being drowned, and

atonce jump into the water to save it. Even here there is the awakening of a desire to save the child. But there is so short a gap between the arousal of desire and its execution that we do not seem to have any consciousness of it. But a large part of our active life requires a lot of deliberation or premeditation. In these cases, the element of volition is clearly involved, and it is as true of a yogi as of an ordinary individual. The conscious direction of energy to the performance of an act is brought about by the desire to do that particular act. A person who simply perceives or knows and is absolutely bereft of emotion or desire, is no better than a statue and can not be supposed to act at all. Actions represent the active side of consciousness and we use the term desire or an equivalvent expression to designate the active aspect. It would be strange to hold that, in the case of a karma yogi, even the action which involves complicated trains of thought becomes as automatic and desireless as breathing or any other spontaneous, un-premeditated activity. We, therefore, think that, in the *Gītā*, the term desireless (Niṣkāma) is used to imply such actions as are done in a spirit of sacrifice and from which all personal motives are absent i.e. actions done in the spirit of the Buddhi-yoga to which we have alluded above. Shri B. G. Tilak in his great work on the *Gītā*, makes a distinction between vāsanā (desire) and āsakti (attachment). An enlightened sage may entertain a desire before he acts but he has no attachment for the

fruit of action. His action is suggested by the particular situation in which he happens to be, but he acts as God himself acts to keep the world going. There is nothing egoistic or personal about the acts of a great Yogi.

The *Gītā* thus places a new point of view before us. As long as the sense of agency or doer-ship is present, one can not be entirely desireless or niṣkāma. At the level of moral act, the sense of egoism is present. The individual, however noble and exalted he may be, cannot transcend the stand-point of a doer or an agent. According to the author of the *Gītā*, one may gradually progress to a stage of spiritual perfection when the ego becomes one with the Universal self and the individual feels that "his individuality is merely the vehicle through which the universal ceutre of energy is manifesting itself, and he identifies his whole essence with the universal energy." The yogi of the *Bhagawad Gītā* acts from a universal point of view and not from the point of view of a limited individual self. He acts but there is no restlessness, no excitement, nor is there any feverish attachment to the results of the action. The action is now done with a 'God-possessed consciousness'. The results are surrendered to the Divine Master of one's being, and so the question of experiencing despondency at failure or exaltation at success does not arise at all. He completely surrenders his personal will to God and regards himself as an instrument in the hands of his master. His whole life becomes a continuous sacrifice

or Yajña. In this condition our emotions do not get into the way of our intelligent will. Our automatic reactions of hate, dislike, grief, and fear to an unpleasant situation and those of joy and liking to pleasant experiences or what may be called the involuntary reactions of Rāga and Dveṣa, may arise or may not arise but they do not effect the actions of a yogi in any way. When this happens, the right emotions of the heart find it easy to manifest themselves. The pure emotions of love, joy and delight which, in ordinary cases, remain clouded over by the unholy and impure emotions of anger, hate and fear, now find ample expression. A purified heart can receive with "an untroubled sweetness and clarity" the various delights which God gives it in the world, but it does not become in any way the slave of those delights.

Transcending the Moral Point of view—

In a number of places, the author of the *Gītā* speaks of the Yogi as above good and evil. In Chapter XIV, a Yogi is described as Triguṇatita i.e. as having transcended the three guṇas of nature including the Sātvika guṇa which stands for goodness and purity. In Chapter XII, 17, the epithet śubha aśubha parityāgi (One who has renounced both good and evil) is applied to him. Similarly, in Chapter II 50 he is spoken of as having gone beyond both virtue and sin.

Some western scholars have drawn, from these verses, the conclusion that the Jñāni or the wise man

of the *Gītā*, in renouncing both good and evil, makes himself completely free to do whatever he likes. It is no longer necessary for him to follow the moral rules. Such writers ignore those verses in the *Gītā* in which a great emphasis is laid upon the cultivation of moral virtues. In fact, morality is a necessary preparatory stage without which spiritual life has no meaning. But there should come a time, according to the author of the *Gītā*, in the spiritual career of a Yogi when morality becomes the very core of his life, so that 'ought' or moral obligation loses all meaning for him. Righteousness flows from him without his being conscious of it. There is no conflict left in his life between duty and inclination. The moral stage is a stage of conflict and endeavour. The Jñāni transcends that stage and enters into, so to speak, a super-moral spiritual condition. This fact is well recognised by Kant when he says "No imperatives hold for the Divine will or in general for a holy will. Ought is here out of place, because the volition is already of itself necessarily in unison with the law". (Metaphysic of morals. Watson's Selections p. 31). When such a thing happens, the life of the yogi over-steps the domain of ethics and culminates in that of religion. It has to be recognised that spiritual life includes ethical life but definitely goes beyond it. When such a stage is reached, the action of a Jñāni become desireless or egoless. He now acts not as a separate individual but as the carrier of the universal will. The Absolute, as it were, enters into his finite life, and manifests itself in whatever he thinks and does.

It may be said, with perfect justification, that even a yogi must have ego-consciousness except on those occasions when he goes into a trance-like condition. Without the sense of ego, it is not possible to live in the way in which we all live and the yogi also lives when he is not absorbed in contemplation. But the ego of a Yogi, as Śrī Rām Kṛṣṇa Parmahansa used to remark, is like a thin and transparent veil which, while enabling the yogi to live, does not conceal from him the universal vision of reality. The actions which proceed from such an ego wear the marks of universality about them. They are practically ego-less or desireless actions in the sense in which these terms are used in the *Gītā* ; but they cannot, as must be obvious by now, be absolutely without desire.

Work and Knowledge

The *Gītā* has rightly emphasized the importance of work in the life of man. Knowledge and action are complimentary to each other, and *Gītā* has given due importance to both of them. Some writers in the past as well as in the present have given one-sided interpretations of the text of the *Gītā*. Śaṅkrāchārya, in the VIIIth century, interpreted *Gītā* as a scripture laying special stress on knowledge. In modern times Śrī B. G. Tilak has expressed the view, that *Gītā* is mainly concerned with disinterested action. Ramanuja, in the twelvth century, tried to interpret the *Gītā* as a scripture of devotion. These are one-sided interpretations. The author of the *Bhagawad Gītā* looked upon life as a whole and devised a scheme

of spiritual evolution which takes into account all sides of human nature. Mr. Brookes is right when he says that the theme of the *Gītā* is "an out and out protest and a solemn warning against the fatal tendency to part asunder that which God unites in one, soul and body, knowledge and action, theory and practice, science and art, wisdom and work *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga*."*

The *Gītā* speaks very highly of Jñāna. "As the fire turns fuel to ashes, so does the fire of wisdom (Jñāna) turns to ashes the effects of all Karmas" (IV. 37). "Even if thou wert the worst sinner, thou shalt cross over all evil by the boat of wisdom alone." (IV. 36). But this does not make the author of the *Gītā* lose his perspective. At another place he extols the way of Niskāma Karma and, in order to show its importance, speaks of it as even better than the path of knowledge. "The path of renunciation of action and that of action done disinterestedly both lead to salvation but of the two, the unselfish performance of actions is better than their renunciation." (V. 2).

In Chapter III, the author feels not the slightest hesitation in saying that for a man who, on the dawn of wisdom, has found his chief delight and contentment in the self, there exists no work which may be regarded as obligatory. He has nothing to gain by actions that he has done or that he has not done. He does not depend upon any being of the world for any interest

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*The Gospel of Life Vol. I, p. 78-79.

of his life. (III. 17-18). It would be wrong to conclude from this and similar other verses that a man who has attained the heights of spiritual wisdom should, according to *Gītā*, not engage himself in action any more. In the next verse, there is a distinct call for the disinterested performance of work that has to be done, for man attains to the highest by doing work without attachment. (III: 19). Being a part of the universe as well of the society in which he is born, even a yogi must continuously work for lok-saṅgraha (social harmony and integration) as long as he lives. The work of such a person is equivalent to no work because it does not bind him in any way. Illustrations of great men like Janaka are given to establish the necessity of doing one's work even after one has attained Divine wisdom. And the argument is clinched by the statement that the Lord of universe, though He has nothing to gain by work, yet goes on working day and night to keep the worlds going. If he were to stop work even for an instant, the whole cosmos would perish. (III. 22-24).

Work is necessary for our life and for our growth. Nobody can do without doing work of one sort or another. The Karma yoga of the *Gītā* speaks to us of the way in which work should be done. It is needless to say that the way of disinterested action is a very important step in the ladder of spiritual evolution. Those of use who are anxious to lift ourselves up spiritually have to watch carefully our day-to-day actions and see that we perform them in the spirit of the teaching of *Bhagawad Gītā*.

We next turn to the element of devotion in the teaching of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Chapter VII

Devotion and Self-Surrender

Devotion is an important item in the spiritual discipline prescribed by the *Bhagawad Gītā*. It stands for the urge to worship the Divine and to surrender one self completely to Him. We have already referred to moments of ecstasy during concentration when the individual forgets his separateness and realises his oneness with the Supreme whole. But these experiences of unity and ecstatic absorption are not frequent. They do not last for long. On other occasions, when one lives on the normal plane, there is a dual feeling of oneself confronting the rest of the vast whole. One knows that he is a part of the whole and therefore one with it, but inspite of this knowledge, the sense of division persists. On these occasions, there arises, in the religious-minded people, a deep impulse of worship and devotion for the Supreme whole. Thus along with the sense of unity, the impulse to worship forms an essential part of all religions. The devotee feels an intense love for the Supreme being and a desire to surrender himself to Him. He perceives the Divine in all happenings and manifestations, and develops a deep faith in Him, which when intensified, takes the form of worship and self-surrender. By means of worship, the devotee tries to surrender himself completely to God, even though

retaining his ego-hood. Thus worship is necessary and complimentary to yogic contemplation, in order to realise one's unity with the Supreme at all moments of life. In worship and devotion the individual, realising his helplessness and the futility of depending solely upon personal efforts, puts himself in the hands of a higher power who is thence-forward to direct him to reach the highest spiritual goal. Devotion, in the words of Śrī Aurbindo is "persistent giving up of all actions of nature into the hands of this greater power, a substitution of its influence, possession and working for the personal effort, until the Divine whom one aspires to, becomes the direct master of the Yoga and effects the entire spiritual and ideal conversion of the being." In *Gītā*, devotion is the crown of spiritual Sādhanā.

In the middle chapters of the *Bhagawad Gītā*, devotion seems to loom large and some times it appears as if the author regards it as an all-sufficient method of spiritual realisation. After revealing himself to Arjuna in his mystic form, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, "By single-minded devotion to me, it is possible to see me in this form, to behold me as I am and to enter into me" (XI. 54). "Fix thy mind on me alone, let thy understanding dwell on me and thou shall live in me hereafter, of that there is no doubt" (XII. 8). In chaptar XI 30-32, even wicked men and persons of small understanding are described as capable of becoming righteous and attaining salvation through devotion to God.

Devotion is thus highly praised in numerous places in the *Gītā*. Many commentators on the *Gītā* have concluded from this fact, that *Gītā* is really a book of devotion, action and knowledge playing only a subordinate role in it. We are asked to sink our consciousness in the Divine by complete devotion and self-consecration. The knowledge of God automatically follows the whole-hearted and single minded worship of the Divine being.

It is true that there are many verses which unequivocally eulogise the path of devotion as the path par excellence ; as the key road to the Divine, but it will be wrong to infer that devotion is prescribed by the *Gītā* as an all-sufficient method of attaining spiritual enlightenment. We can get the complete view only by reading the book as a whole. No doubt is left after that, that the scheme of salvation as prescribed by the *Gītā* has a number of facets corresponding to the diverse threads that go to constitute human nature. Man is not mere intellect or will or emotion. He is a composite being in whom all these aspects are present to a greater or smaller extent. In some persons intellect may be the dominating factor, as in others feeling or will may be more prominent. But there is not the slightest reason to believe that any method can be regarded as complete in which only intellect or will or feeling is emphasised, relegating the other two to a negligible position. Mental harmony involves the synthesis and balance of all aspects of our being and so the author of the *Gītā* gives a

seheme of life in which all constituent factors of human nature find their due place. The tendency to regard devotion as a complete method in itself appeared at a much later period in the history of Indian religious thought.

The *Gītā* does not absolve a man of devotion from the performance of his daily duties. We are asked to perform our duties as a service to God. In Chapter XVIII. 46, we are told that man attains perfection in the worship of the Divine by doing his prescribed duties. We are to perform all our actions as an offering to God, and we are to worship God through the disinterested performance of our duties. "Whatever thou doest, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou offerest in sacrifice, whatever thou givest, whatever austerity thou undergoeth, do that, O son of Kunti, as an offering to me." (IX. 27). Disinterested performance of acts and the attitude of complete dedication and surrender are to go together, and both of them pre-suppose knowledge of the divine being and faith in him. In the *Gītā*, knowledge, action and devotion are so thoroughly interwoven that one cannot be separated from the others. We shall therefore treat devotion not as a separate all-sufficient method of attaining spiritual harmony but as an important constituent of the total scheme placed before us by the author of *Bhagawad Gītā*.

The God which *Gītā* asks us to worship is a God with attributes. In Chapters 10 and 11, we are definitely instructed to see God first in his most

impressive manifestations and later on to look upon every thing small or great, as forming part of the great Cosmic person and therefore divine in itself. Though the author of the *Gītā* accepts meditation on Nirguṇa or quality-less Brahman as a legitimate method of divine realisation, his preference is clearly for the worship of God with qualities. "Those who worship the imperishable, the indefinable, the unmanifested, the omni-present, the unthinkable, the unchanging, the unmoving and the constant.........they also attain to me. But the difficulty of persons, whose hearts are set on the unmanifested, is greater, as it is hard for the embodied beings to reach the goal of the unmanifested." (XII. 3-5). "But those who, resigning all acts to me and intent on me, worship me by meditation, with constant devotion, such persons with thoughts completely directed to me, I at once deliver from the ocean of life and death, O' *Bhāratā* (Arjuna). Therefore on me fix thy mind, on me let thy intelligence dwell. Thou shalt, without any doubt, live in me hereafter." (XII. 6-8).

Though it is clear that the author of the *Gītā* recommends the worship of God with attributes in preference to the contemplation of attributeless Brahman, there is no reason to infer from this, that the worship of such a God is only possible, as some people believe, through the worship of idols or other material symbols. There is very little in the *Gītā* to suggest that the worship of God can be carried on only with the help of material symbols.

Of course the *Gītā* refers to the worship of various deities, demons, spirits and dead ancestors current in its time, but it shows its highest regard for the worship of the one God (IX. 25). There is probably only one verse in the whole of the *Gītā*, which contains a reference to idol worship. "Who soever offers to me a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or even water with devotion, such offering of the pure hearted devotee, I accept." (IX. 26). But in the next verse we are told what the author really means by making an offering. "What ever thou doest, what thou eatest, whatever thou givest or sacrificest, whatever penances thou makest, do all that O son of Kunti, as an offering to me." The whole life of man, and every activity in that life are to be offered at the feet of the Divine Master.

It thus appears that when the author of the *Gītā* speaks of devotion he does not mean by it the worship of idols nor does he exclude it either. We are asked to worship God by contemplating his Divine qualities (X) and by making a complete surrender of all our actions to him (IX. 27). Of course, the *Gītā* does not condemn those who worship God with the help of idols, but it definitely regards such worship as inferior to contemplation and complete surrender of oneself to the Divine being. As a matter of fact the attitude of self-surrender, according to the *Gītā* is a chief mark of devotion. Besides self-surrender, devotion implies loving contemplation of God, preferably, by means of verbal symbols. In order to

bring, before the mind, the various attributes of God, words are the most important of all the means used for contemplation. They are capable of great diversity and of all sorts of combinations. They enable us to fix the idea of God firmly in our mind by the constant repitition of certain sacred syllables and by combining them in all sorts of ways in order to make our conception of God precise and comprehensive as far as possible. The *Gītā* recognises the value of Japa and verbal meditation as aids to the spiritual transformation of our nature. "I am Bhṛgu among the great saints, of words I am the single syllable OM, and among sacrifices I am the Japa sacrifice and of immovable things I am the Himālayas." (X. 25). Here Kṛṣṇa speaks of Japa as the greatest of sacrifices and of Om as the most important syllable to be used for recitation or Japa. According to Patañjli Japa consists in repeating a sacred syllable while at the same time intently meditating on its meaning. In this way, the inner consciousness is awakened and all obstacles removed.*

When a combination of words in the form of a formula is repeated in a low and monotonous voice, to the accompaniment of appropriate feeling, it gives a powerful suggestion to the mind, and become a very effective means for producing the corresponding mental attitude. Says Srī K. M. Munshi, "I had learnt hundreds of songs by heart. I found that when I sang

*Yogasūtra I. 27, 28.

an appropriate song with feeling, I could temporarily produce the corresponding state of mind, whether it was of despair, love, anger or dispassion ; this let me into the secret of Japa."* If, for instance a person wants to produce in himself a state of poise and endurance, let him repeat with feeling the following verse of the *Bhagawad Gītā* each day for a number of days ; "Contacts with the objects of sense, O son of Kunti, produce sensations of heat and cold, pleasure and pain ; They come and go and do not last for long. Endure them, O Bhārat (II. 14). There are many other verses in *Bhagawad Gītā*, which can, by constant repitition produce the desired change in our mental attitude.

Religious Japa or repitition of a sacred syllable like OM has a great spiritual significance. Besides producing, in course of time, the state of concentration to which we referred in a previous chapter, it helps the devotee to develop a great love for the object of his contemplation and thereby to gradually lose the sense of separateness and egoism. Japa regularly performed ultimately leads to what is termed Dhruvāsmṛti or constant remembrance of God at all times. Even when the devotee is engaged in practical work, the idea of God subconsciously illuminates his consciousness....... "The human soul draws near to Divine by contemplation of God's power, wisdom and goodness, by constant remembrance of him with a

***Bhagawad Gītā* and Modern life, p. 124.

devout heart, by conversing about his qualities with others, by singing his praise with fellowmen, and by doing all acts in his service."*

Gītā lays a special emphasis on the need of meditating on God at the hour of death. The state of mind at the time of death is supposed, according the common Hindu belief, to determine the nature of the next birth of a dying person. If one meditates on God at the time of death and leaves his body while remembering God, he attains to the Divine estate (VIII. 5).

Besides this constant remembrance of the Divine name, devotion in its completed form, implies the attitude of total self-surrender. The devotee 'sees only the Divine and seeks only after the Divine'; he therefore feels the urgent need of consecrating his whole being ;—his mind, sense, thought, feeling and action to the source of his being. Every part of him is a gift from God and so it must be surrendered to Him with complete joy. Nothing is to be kept back. There is nothing trivial or insignificant in life which is not to be made into an offering for God. The author of the *Gītā* does not teach that the objects of the world and our activities in it are illusory and un real and, therefore, of no consequence. As a matter of fact, God manifests himself through them and therefore, they have the imprint of God on them. Life, as it is being lived, is not completely Divine, and

*Radhakrishnan. *Bhagawad Gīt?*, p. 60.

so the manifestation of the Divine through it is only imperfect. We have to transform every aspect of our being so that it could be made into a fit offering for the Divine. This is not an easy job, as it involves the changing of the habits of a life-time, which grow more and more rigid with the passing of time. The constant remembrance of God to which we referred above simply means that every part of our nature, when ever it begins to take a downward course has to be pulled up and called back to the central faith and the highest vision of life.

The spirit of total surrender involves not only the transformation of our outer activities, but also our inner feelings and emotions. We have to rid our mind, by proper understanding and reflection of all undesirable emotions, such as anger, hate, envy, malice and fear. These emotions separate us from others and set our interests against theirs. Apart from this clearance process, all positive emotions of love, charity, compassion and goodwill are to be cultivated. "To the inner worship of the Divine or the Supreme by the devotion of the heart.........can be added a worship through altruistic works or a preparation through acts of love, of benevolence, of service to mankind, or to those around us." In religious life however, service to man is not an end in itself, as it is in secular ethics, but a part of the worship of the Supreme. The God-intoxicated devotee would not rest till he sees and worships God in every living creature by acts of love and charity.

As the spirit of self-surrender advances, the element of effort involved in all attempts at self-purification gradually gives way to the inner faith that from now onwards the Divine will, of itself, will remove all traces of impurity from the heart, mind and body of the devotee. He sincerely and humbly calls for the Divine to descend into his being and transform it. Just as the mother responds to the cry of the child and removes its dirt and impurity, so does the devotee ultimately surrender himself to the Divine with complete faith that the Supreme being will take care of him and make him pure and noble.

In this mood of self-surrender, the devotee does not regard anything as his own. Everything about him ; his possessions, his children and his name and fame all belong to God, and he derives great happiness out of this act of mental surrender and self-abnegation. In the last years of his life, Leo Tolstoy gave away all his possessions to the poor and began to live like a peasant, doing all his work with his own hands, and it gave him immense joy. Tolstoy was a Russian aristocrat and possessed extensive lands and property. He himself was a great author, and was admired all over the world for his brilliant literary productions. He had a beautiful wife and talented children. His literary fame was great. He had everything which is supposed to make men happy and yet he was not happy and often thought of committing suicide. He remained in this state of dejection for two years and then his spirit was gradually filled with profound

feelings of devotion and divine love. He could no longer live his old life nor could he any more claim anything as his own. With devotion, renunciation and surrender there came joy and peace into his troubled soul.

Bhakti thus, according to the *Gītā*, consists in complete surrender to the Supreme. "When the devotee truly surrenders himself to the Divine, God becomes a ruling passion of his mind and whatever the devotee does, he does for the glory of God."* Even our daily acts are to be performed in a spirit of devotion. The doctrine of disinterested action is thus very harmoniously blended with that of devotion and self-surrender. This spirit of reconcilement between devotion and action is expressed in a number of places in the *Bhagawad Gītā*. Some of these verses are given below :—

"Performing all actions, with complete reliance on me, he obtains through my grace, the imperishable and eternal abode.

"Resigning in thought all action to me, be constantly devoted to me and with a steadfast understanding fix all thy thoughts on me. (XVIII. 56-57)."

"On me fix thy mind, be devoted to me, sacrifice to me, bow down before me. Thou shalt surely come to me. I promise thee truly for thou art dear to me. (XVIII. 65).

*Radhakrishnan. *Bhagawad Gītā*. P. 65.

We are told further in Chapter IX. 29 that God is alike to all. None is hateful nor is anyone dear to him, but those who worship him with love and devotion, are in Him and He in them". The cultivation of the spirit of devotion and self-surrender is thus an important part of the spiritual discipline (Sādhanā) advocated by the *Bhagawad Gītā*.

Kṛṣṇa as incarnation of God. In the *Gītā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa often speaks of Himself as Lord of the universe and exhorts Arjuna to devote himself wholeheartedly to Him (Kṛṣṇa), to surrender all actions to Him and to live in Him completely. There is no doubt that by the time *Bhagawad Gītā* was composed, Kṛṣṇa had come to be worshipped as an incarnation of God. We have clear reference to the incarnation theory in IVth Chapter of the *Bhagawad Gītā*. "Whenever there is a decline of righteousness, and unrighteousness reigns supreme, I incarnate myself. I am born in every age for the protection of the good and for the destruction of the evil-doers". (IV. 8). According to the orthodox Hindus, God manifests Himself in a human form when spiritual values are threatened and there is a crisis in the affairs of men. His incarnation is not limited to a particular time or place. He is born whenever there arises a 'cosmic necessity' for Him to appear. There is no doubt that the author of the *Bhagawad Gītā* was a believer in the incarnation theory.

The dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, begun at the human level, is very soon transformed into a

spiritual instruction from the Divine Being Himself to the human spirit represented in the form of Arjuna. God himself, as it were, speaks to the human soul for its well-being. The spiritual truths are thus presented in a most dramatic form, and to our mind, this dramatic presentation is partly responsible for the wide popularity of this great religious scripture, After a slight mental shock which non-believers in incarnation theory receive in the beginning, they very soon get adjusted to this mode of presentation and the incarnation theory recedes into the back-ground.

As one reads the *Gītā*, one finds himself getting closer and closer to the source of his being. God no longer remains a remote and unthinkable reality. He stands before us, as it were, and even condescends to talk to us and take away from us the burden of our sorrows. We personally do not accept the incarnation theory nor does there seem to be any necessity for God to assume a bodily form for any purpose whatsoever. His infinite power is being manifested at every moment in all happenings and events of the universe. Even then we would not wish that the present form of the *Bhagawad Gītā* were changed in any way. Just as it stands, it gives to us the vision of higher consciousness, fills our heart with the joy of devotion and impels us to surrender all our actions to the Divine, with complete self-consecration.

The Spiritual Sādhanā in Brief. We may summarise here the various elements of the Sādhanā prescribed by the *Bhagawad Gītā*.

Availing of his capacity for self-consciousness, the spiritual aspirant should put himself in the position of a witness or spectator of all that passes in his mind and whatever happens around him. He should cultivate the habit of looking, from outside as it were, at the various physical pains and diseases, good and bad thoughts and desirable and undesirable emotions that arise in his mind, as well as at the various good and bad outside happenings. He should keep a watch, every moment, on his movements, actions, thoughts, desires and emotions. He should be able, as a result of the habit of constant watchfulness, to put himself in the attitude of an observer when anger, for instance, arises in him or fear or love or when he feels inclined to sloth or intemperance. To undesirable states of mind he should say no, and to desirable mental states he should offer a glad welcome. If undesirable words have already been spoken or undesirable acts done, he need not put himself to grief or repentence but express his disapproval of the same like an external witness and gradually learn to check himself before the action is done. This habit of taking an outside and impartial view of himself would prevent him from identifying himself with all that is not his self. He would, like a master, keep away from undesirable states of mind and give his assent to nobler mental movements.

Realizing our independence from the not-self is a very necessary step in spiritual discipline. All other steps stem from this initial realisation. Of

course, we cannot rest here. We have to take the next step to realise our oneness with the universal whole. The liberated ego is not to remain perpetually confronting other egos without realising its underlying unity with them in the life of the Absolute or the Whole. We are, according to the second element in the spiritual discipline of the *Gītā*, required to develop the habit of seeing the universal spirit everywhere, in all phenomena—in the sun and the stars, in the mountains and rivers, plants and animals, in all events and happenings and in all thoughts and feelings. Just as the same life pulsates in all parts of a tree, the same Ātmā similarly sustains all objects and happenings in the world. A spiritual aspirant sees the Supreme Self in all things and all things in the Supreme Self. We are to realise our oneness with the Supreme reality.

Along with this the *Gītā* inculcates the daily practice of meditation. These exercises, if practised regularly and for a long time, lift the mind above distractions and produce a great calm and peace of mind. Apart from practising concentration we should also daily meditate on great moral virtues such as love, compassion, kindliness, non-anger and patience, temperance, truthfulness and fearlessness. Unless one is firmly grounded in moral perfection, religious practices have no meaning.

The *Gītā* does not advocate homlessness or a life of renunciation. We are to live in the world and work for the good of our fellowmen. But the work is to be done in the spirit of sacrifice and disinteres-

ted service without our being attached to its fruits. Every effort is to be made to adopt this attitude in all acts of daily life.

And lastly, we are asked to live a life of complete devotion and self-consecration to the Lord of the universe. Whatever we are and whatever we possess is not ours. It is the gift of God and should be surrendered by us to Him in loving trust and faith. Our actions are to be done in a spirit of dedication, and we are to cheerfully accept whatever comes to us in the form of success or failure, pleasure or pain, honour or dishonour, or any of the other pairs of opposites which attend human life.

This is the scheme of spiritual discipline as taught in the *Bhagawad Gītā.* But the author of the *Gītā* is not oblivious of the fact that people differ in temperament and, therefore, in their efforts at spiritual discipline, they are liable to put varying emphasis on one element or the other. The aspirant therefore is left free to follow whatever course appears easy and practicable to him, and to make his start from any aspect of his being. In Chapter XII, Kṛṣṇa has a high word of praise for those who take to the meditation of formless Brahman. But, at the same time, he makes it clear that it is, comparatively, an arduous method and not suitable for every body. It is easier according to him to contemplate the Divine as manifested in world-phenomena. Such persons as are solely devoted to God and worship him with constant meditation are speedily rescued from the ocean of

birth and death. (XII. 6-7). If any person however finds himself more inclined to the yoga of practice (Dhyāna Yoga) as described in chapter VI, instead of the yoga of devotion, he is welcome to make it the starting point of his Sādhanā, but if he feels disinclined to the Abhyāsa yoga as well, he may begin with the performance of actions in total self-surrender to God, and if total surrender is found impracticable, let him then perform his actions without any desire for fruits. (XII. 8-11). In the next verse, where it is said that Jñāna (Knowledge) is better than Abhyāsa Yoga (yoga of concentration), devotion better than Jñāna and disinterested performance of action better than devotion, the term 'better' should be understood in the sense of easier or less arduous. Any part of the total Sādhanā, if done well, will naturally produce a great change in the spiritual seeker and lead him on to the practice of the other aspects as well.

Yoga is the practical side of religion. Its practice is meant for persons who otherwise enjoy normal physical and mental health. A yogi as the *Bhagawad Gītā* clearly indicates, should observe all rules of health and he should be moderate in the matter of diet, sleep, exercise etc. If he begins, in the course of yogic discipline to suffer from some serious physical malady, he will have to get himself medically treated like other persons. Similarly, a person endowed with normal emotions of life, can take to yoga, but if he is afflicted with a serious mental illness

he cannot expect to be cured of it by the practice of yoga. He will have to undergo mental treatment for the cure of mental illness. There is a great mis-understanding in the minds of most people that yoga is a cure for even serious physical and mental illnesses. This is not true. As a matter of fact, in the presence of serious physical and mental illnesses, yoga cannot be practised properly. It must, however, be admitted that regular yogic concentration and meditation exercises have a generally beneficial influence on one's body and mind.

Buddhi Yoga:—The spiritual discipline presented by the *Gītā* is called Buddhi yoga or yoga of the intelligent will. (II. 49, XVIII. 57). There is nothing esoteric or mystical about it. All the elements of this yoga can be rationally understood, and their importance judged on the basis of intelligence alone. The author does not ask us to cultivate any supra-rational faculty in order to achieve the highest goal of life. At every step we are to make use of our will under the guidance of experience and reason. The *Gītā*, no doubt, wants us to cultivate faith and devotion, but it is not a blind and irrational faith. It follows inevitably from our understanding of the nature of ultimate reality as taught in the *Gītā* itself. All other parts of the discipline, similarly, find their justification on rational grounds. The yogi of the *Gītā*, therefore has been aptly given the name of Buddhi-yukta as well (II, 50-51).

Yoga and Psychology:—The aim of spiritual

Sādhanā (Yoga) is to effect psychological transformation in man. The underlying idea is that the spiritual aspirant is to transcend the egoistic outlook on life and by constant reflection and meditation learn to live on a broad-based consciousness. All wrong is at bottom an egoistic self-seeking, while virtue implies a feeling of unity with our fellow human beings. The objective of all psycho-therapeutic systems also is to liberate a mentally ill person from his egoistic pre-occupation with himself. The insane person cuts himself off from the objective world and lives in his own private world. For him, his ego becomes, more or less, his entire world. Insanity is the most intense form of egoistic consciousness at human level. But even those persons who are not insane, but suffer from neurotic troubles, are found on psychological analysis, to be the victims of an egoistic outlook in some form or an other. A neurotic is at bottom an ego-centered person though it is a weak ego at best, being under the influence of unconscious drives on the one hand and a stern conscience on the other. It is this egoistic pre-occupation with regard to a particular part of himself, which prevents him from feeling quite at home in the world of men and things. Psychological analysis aims at removing that blind spot, thereby enabling the individual to see himself in relation to objective reality.

We call a person normal if he is, to all intents and purposes, satisfactorily adjusted to his social environment, and is successful in his life according to

conventional human standards, but in spite of that, he may not be a happy person. It is here that religious discipline steps in and aims at removing all those egoistic elements which still persist and block the way to a cheerful and serene life in the midst of all kinds of turmoils and vicissitudes.

A normal person has also a great measure of egoism in himself. Psychological analysis may free him from unconscious egoistic pre-occupation which prevents him, without his knowing how, from satisfactory social relations. He is made free from his inhibitions and he learns to assert himself and claim his rights, and also to enter into normal social relations with others; but the ego remains all the same in an unwholesome form, and as long as the ego is there on the conscious or unconscious level, clashes and conflicts are bound to arise and make a mess of all sound social relationships.

From the spiritual point of view, what we ordinarily call a normal life will not do. It leaves the ego as strongly entrenched as ever, though most of its activities are now carried on at a conscious and self-directed level. The spiritual discipline takes up the question of the psychological transformation of an individual and follows it to its logical end. The conscious ego must find its resting place in the universal self and from there carry on all the activities of life.

We are told by the author of the *Gītā*, to begin with, to become a witness or spectator of ourselves

i.e. to become perfectly aware of all our movements in the soul. But it is not enough to be self-aware. We have to realise next that what we call our self is a part of the whole. This, in the language of the *Gītā* consists in seeing God everywhere, the same self in all manifestations, in ourselves as well as in others. What we call the ego is only a temporary psychic formation in the life of an individual. It must find its abiding rest in the life of the whole. The vision of oneness has to be attained by constant reflection on the nature of reality and also by means of the practice of concentration exercises. This is to be accompanied by a reflection on moral virtues as well as on the attainment of an attitude of non-attachment and equal-mindedness under all circumstances.

All these devices are meant to achieve egolessness. All activities will hence-forward take place on the basis of non-egoistic consciousness. The ego that will remain after this psychological transformation will be a harmless ego. There would be accession to power, knowledge and concentrated application but all this will be in the interest of the social whole, and the gulf between an individual and the rest of the world would no longer remain a problem as it always is on the ordinary human level. In regard to the normal activities of life, the individual is required to perform all his tasks and prescribed duties in a spirit of detachment and disinterestedness. They are our contribution to the welfare of the whole, a mode of Divine worship, as it were. Each act of ours is to

be made into an offering to the whole. Our constant effort should be to live a life of complete devotion and self-surrender.

As modern Psychology tells us, we are for most of the time, conscious only of the surface part of our mind. A large part of it remains submerged at the unconscious level. We become conscious of its existence when it has overt effects on our conduct. We are sometimes upset by our involuntary and hidden impulses, and do things which are definitely irrational, and which we cannot easily account for. Psycho-analysis aims at bringing these unconscious ideas into the focus of consciousness, so that we may become aware of them and thereby bring them under the control of reason.

During meditation also, all sorts of thoughts, good and bad, as well as so-far-hidden factors may emerge; but they are to be watched, as it were, from the outside in a detached way, till they gradually pass away and a state of undisturbed meditation supervenes. Yogic Sādhanā in a way does what psycho-analysis claims to do. It clears out the impure factors from the mind, brings them to the light of day and destroys them. "All kinds of thoughts." Says Raman Maharshi, "arise in meditation, That is only right, for what lies hidden in you is brought out. Unless it rises up, how can it be destroyed."

The method of spiritual discipline has a different approach from that of the psychological method of treatment. The spiritual technique insists on adopting

higher and purer modes of living, doing our actions in a selfless and detached frame of mind, cultivating an attitude of self-surrender, non-attachment and equanimity, and steadying the mind by concentration exercises. All these things are expected to lead, in a gradual way, to the eradication of sanskāras or the old habits of thought, feeling and action. The unconscious tendencies and ideas lose their force. According to yoga we can purify and transform our nature by bringing to the fore, the higher and diviner ranges of our mind, rather than the lower ones. It is held that as the conscious mind becomes more and more pure, non-attached and steady, the hidden forces no longer remain operative, and in course of time fade away. Deeper exploration of mind is not encouraged. As a matter of fact, there would be enough of lower hidden stuff rising up of itself during concentration and getting dissolved. Thus yoga does not work from the lower levels upwards: the ground of spiritual integration is sought at the higher super-conscious or divine level and not at the lower level as is done in psycho-analysis. The yoga discipline, therefore, as already said, insists on a pure and selfless life, regular study of scriptures, constant practice of meditation, and an attitude of non-attachment, equal-mindedness and self-surrender.

It may even be said that mental troubles arise because, on account of adverse influences in childhood and in later life, the individual fails to acquire the spiritual or religious outlook on life. In this connection the following remarks of C. G. Jung, a well

known psycho-therapist are worth considering. "Among all the patients in the second half of my life, there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that every one of them fell ill because he had lost that which the living religions of every age have given their followers and none of them has really been healed who did not regain his religious outlook."*

The practice of yoga, however, is to be made a whole-life affair. Even the great spiritual masters do not give up the discipline after they have achieved the spiritual goal. The spiritual practice must continue throughout life. There is always the risk of becoming yoga-bhraṣṭa i.e. fallen from yoga. One cannot afford, however great and spiritually advanced he may be, to be off his guard. "The spirit of man is encased in a body which has its own legitimate hungers." This association remains till death and anytime it may cause his downfall. We read, in ancient Indian religious scriptures, of many Ṛṣis of old falling into temptation or in other words lapsing into ordinary consciousness through momentary carelessness. Spiritual Sādhanā, however, becomes so pleasant after a long-continued practice that it no longer remains a burden or a boresome activity. Eternal vigilance is the price which an individual has to pay for his spiritual freedom. Daily meditation and acts of worship should be made as habitual as one's daily walk or exercise.

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*C. G. Jung. Modern man in search of Soul, P. 264.

Chapter VIII

Going Beyond

We have tried, in the previous chapters, to present the spiritual teachings of the *Bhagawad Gitā*. It is a religious scripture for all types of people, from the spiritually advanced to the average intelligent persons of a religious bent of mind. In the words of Dr. Radha Krishnan, "it gives utterance to the aspirations of the pilgrims of all sects who seek to tread the inner way to the city of God." It preaches universal religion in a most impressive and poetic language and, therefore, it is no wonder if it has had an irresistable appeal to the religious-minded people of the East as well as of the West.

The Meaning of "Spiritual"—It may be worthwhile to explain here as to what is meant by the word 'spiritual.' This word is used frequently in religious literature and we have also made an ample use of it in this book. If the word is to have any meaning, it should refer to some concrete experience of our psychic life, an experience to which no other word could be properly applied.

Ordinarily, the term 'spiritual' is applied to all kinds of religious activities. All acts of worship and meditation are called spiritual as contrasted to acts which merely promote worldly interests. By these acts the individual tries to transcend his narrow self

and to transport himself into a wider experience. Besides religious activities, there are many other self-transcending experiences in human life, to which the term 'spiritual' can be equally applied. Every type of experience, activity or attitude which is characterised by the quality of self-transcendence may be called spiritual. It is the special capacity in man, by which he outreaches his narrow individuality and thereby brings about the development and broadening of his self. The most obvious examples of self-transcendence are to be met within the phenomena of love and dedication to a great cause. The lover transcends his self and becomes one with the self of his beloved. His self expands and thereby enhances itself. All types of genuine love, friendship and seeking the companionship of one's fellowmen are self-transcending experiences and are spiritual in their nature. The same is true of the experience of a person who identifies himself with a great cause which goes beyond himself and envelops, in its scope, the well-being of his people or the world at large. Every intellectual activity may not be strictly spiritual, but the knowledge which takes us out of ourselves and unites us with the greater whole is a spiritual experience. It gives a vivid and emotionally surcharged consciousness of our oneness with reality. When we truly regard our acts as acts of sacrifice, dedicated to the Lord of the universe, they are transformed, according to the *Gītā*, into spiritual acts. In this way it is possible to spiritualise every act of ours, however trivial and self-directed it may appear to be, provided

it is made into an offering to the Divine. By means of our self-transcending capacity we can unite ourselves with the past ; we can go beyond the barriers of space and traverse, in imagination, its farthest parts. We do not thereby remain mere finite creatures but put ourselves right into the heart of reality and become infinite ourselves. We no longer remain a mere drop in the ocean but become the ocean itself in its vast expanse and power.

Spiritual excellences, according to Susan Stebbing, include "love for human beings, delight in creative activities of all kinds, respect for truth, satisfaction in learning to know what is true about this world, loyalty to other human beings, generosity of thought and sympathy with those who suffer, hatred of cruelty and others evils, devotion to duty and steadfastness in seeking one's ideals, delight in the beauty of nature and in art, in short the love and pursuit of what is worth while for its own sake." (Ideals and Illusions) All these are self-transcending qualities and activities.

The spiritual experiences are always tinged with strong emotional tones. These higher emotions aroused by self-transcending experiences and aspirations are an index of spiritual nature. Without the accompaniment of soul-stirring emotions of love and compassion, of joy and hope, of peace and calm and of devotion and self-surrender, there can be no spirituality. Emotion is an important part of human nature and provides the driving force for all activities. We

have to gradually purge our minds of emotions of lower type which are commonly found associated with our biological urges. They have their own importance in life ; but the developed spiritual nature of man is marked by its own characteristic emotions which are of a highly satisfying and self-transcending nature and which ennoble and purify life.

The word spiritual has direct reference to the idea of spirit. In the view of Indian philosophy there is, in man, spirit besides body and mind. The light of consciousness belongs to the spirit and it illumines the activities of the senses, the mind and the intelligence. The spirit is without egoism and is universal in character and outlook.

The spiritual experience therefore consists in the revelation of spirit and this is what gives it a self-transcending character. This self-transcending experience has to be strengthened. The various elements of religious discipline to which we have referred in previous chapters are all meant to strengthen the self-transcending aspect of our psychical life. It is needless to say that this spiritual transformation is to be effected in the inner life of an individual. External rituals and ceremonies may be helpful to a point, in so far as they turn the individual's mind towards religion ; but they cannot serve as a substitute for inner religious experience.

The life of self-transcendence is a life of complete adjustment. Spiritual life, therefore, can also be described as a well-integrated life ; a life of adjust-

ment, inside and outside. A spiritually advanced person is free from inner and outer conflicts. His thoughts, emotions and actions are thoroughly adjusted to one another as well as to his social and natural environment. His desires and his ideals do not pull him in opposite directions, nor does he find himself ill at ease in diverse social situations. He does not lose his mental balance when things go against him nor when he has to face natural mishaps and calamities. He always exhibits a never-failing spirit of love and compassion towards his fellow men, and whatever the reactions of people around him, favourable or adverse, he never lets go the loving and compassionate attitude of mind. They may hate him, but he hates them not. His desire for being friendly to others knows no bounds. In the face of all objective happenings pleasant or otherwise, he maintains an attitude of non-attachment and equal-mindedness. All these feelings and expressions of good will and equanimity are crowned with an inner faith and devotion to the Lord of the universe or the cosmic spirit which animates and enlivens the world of ever-changing manifestations.

According to the spiritual point of view, all the ills of life are due to the narrow outlook of the self i.e. when the self fails to make wider self-transcending contacts with Reality in its various forms.

The Outlook of the Modern Man :—A modern educated person has not much use for a mere ceremonial religion. Religion has lost its appeal in the

modern age mostly because it has lost its inner soul. Instead of effecting a change in the inner life of an individual, it merely demands belief in certain religious dogmas and adherence to certain prescribed rites and ceremonies. The scientific spirit of the modern age cannot reconcile itself to this meaningless and mechanical conception of religion. But the spiritual urge is present in all people. The knowledge of science cannot satisfy this urge. There is an urge in all of us to transcend our narrow self and to merge ourselves into the broader life of humanity and the universe at large. It is a call for the cultivation of cosmic consciousness. The teachings of *Bhagawad Gītā* can, to our mind, meet this universal aspiration of mankind in a most satisfactory manner. Its concepts of God and self, and its doctrines of devotion and self-surrender, of disinterested performance of action and of non-attachment are such as can very well satisfy the religious needs of the modern man.

The modern age is an age of action. People want to achieve results. Leaving aside a small number of persons who are devoted to the pursuit of knowledge and art for their own sake, most of the people in all countries are engaged in various activities for the attainment of wealth, pleasure, fame, power, success and national well being and prosperity. Apart from our daily vocations of life and our personal ends, we are expected to take interest in various political, economic, and social movements and contribute our share to whatever scheme of social welfare we may be interested

in. There is no doubt that in modern age there is the desire that the amenities of life and the comforts and conveniences found, in abundance, in many advanced countries, should be distributed evenly, as far as possible, among all people of the world. Poverty, disease and ignorance are to be eradicated, wherever they exist. The desire for social justice seems to be spreading, atleast, among the higher sections of all nations. It does not mean that exploitation of man by man has ceased, but it is no longer looked upon, as was the case in bygone ages, as a matter of pride or self-glorification. In practical life people have not yet risen to the height of the social ideal of which the enlightened and cultured members in every community have begun to have a more or less clear vision. Things have so arranged themselves that no sensitive man can afford to remain detached from what is happening all around him. We are all required to make our contribution to the fund of common welfare in whatever way we can. This seems to be the demand of modern society from its members in every part of the world.

What has the *Bhagawad Gītā* to say on this point ? There was a war going to take place, many centuries ago, between two parties one of which was definitely in the wrong. The leaders of these two parties were closely related to one another by ties of blood and in many other ways. On this occasion, Arjuna, the victorious hero of many a battle saw, ranged against him, his cousins, his teachers and many

others to whom he was bound by ties of affection, friendship and respect. He suddenly felt an extreme repugnance and shrinking from a war which involved the wholesale destruction of those people. It was on this occasion, when Arjuna wanted to get away from action, that Kṛṣṇa taught his famous Gospel of work. The *Gītā* wants us to do our share of work for the preservation of social order, as long as we are in the active phase of our life.

So far the teaching of *Gītā* is in consonance with the demands of modern activistic ethical thought, but there is something more in the teaching of *Gītā* which the modern man can very well adopt as his guide in life. We generally work in order to achieve results. Our mind is fixed on the fruit of our work and not so much on the work itself. In the Karma Yoga (Way of action), as taught by the *Gītā*, action is not a means to an end but is in a way an end in itself. It does not mean that we are to act blindly without giving any thought to what we want to achieve by our action. Our action arises out of a given situation. It presents to us a problem which is to be solved by us. The action now no longer remains a mere means; it becomes an end to be performed well. "Yoga is skill in action," says the *Gītā*. According to this doctrine both the end involved in the given situation, and the means to it in the form of action are of equal importance. As a matter of fact, what is under our control is not so much the result of our action as the action itself. The actual fruit of our action may

be what we sought to realize by it or it may be quite different from it. The *Gītā* says that once we have chosen a particular line of action, we should give our whole attention to it and do it well without at all worrying about the result, and remaining unpurturbed both in success and failure. This may appear a bit hard to understand. What is the worth of an action, it may be asked, if it does not lead to the desired result ? It is worth remembering, that if we think too much of the result we may be tempted to use all sorts of dubious means in order to achieve it. This, the author of the *Gītā* would not allow. He wants us to keep in mind the purity of the end as well as the purity of the means. The whole matter can be put as follows :—

The world-process is regarded by the author of the *Gītā* as a huge sacrifice, every event and happening in it being contributory to the success of the total world-scheme. Every event ows its importance to its place in the totality of things. In the social order of which man forms a part, the experiment of universal welfare is going on, and we as composite units are to contribute to the great experiment of social advancement, by well-directed efforts in our respective spheres of life. The goal, according to the Karma Yoga of *Gītā*, is the preservation and progress of social order and not the achievement of personal gain. In working for social welfare, each individual works for his own welfare too, as he himself is a part of the social order. We, as individual members, have no

separate claims apart from the good of society as a whole. The *Gītā* leaves a person free to choose his own line of work, without any interference from the State, according to his powers and opportunities, but it insists that whatever work is chosen, it is to be put in the service of society. The primary thing is to do our work as a form of social service, our own individual maintenance and comfort taking the secondary place.

The fact is that most of our work, even the so-called social work is done out of personal considerations. We are more often concerned with personal ends than social welfare. It may psychologically be a difficult achievement, but the *Gītā* wants us to lay aside all such considerations as honour and dishonour, victory and defeat, success and failure, praise and censure, and work for the sake of work alone. Work done in this spirit becomes an ennobling experience for the soul and a really useful contribution to social welfare.

Various schemes for the promotion of national and international welfare fail because they are actually inspired by motives which are not what they profess to be. Work, in these various fields, is not done for the sake of common good objectively considered, but for what each nation considers as its special interest. These interests come in clash with one another and so naturally all these schemes come to nothing.

The author of the *Gītā*, perhaps, had no idea of international relationships when promulgating the

doctrine of disinterested action; but it applies as much to international sphere as to national and individual spheres. If each international problem were judged from the universal point of view and its solution sought on that basis, most of the problems would be solved in course of time. But there exist rivalries and suspicions among nations as they do among individuals and they naturally introduce all sorts of complications in international relations.

Our aim of Life :—There is a need to revise our common ideas about the aim of life. We generally think of the aim of life in terms of material comforts and enjoyments. The advance in scientific knowledge, with its resulting applications in various practical fields, has led to the accumulation of means of enjoyment. Each nation is anxious to have the largest share of these enjoyments for its members. And in every nation there is a similar race among individuals for the possession of riches to an unlimited extent so that they could have the maximum amount of material comforts and luxuries. This ideal has got to be changed. Experience should teach every body that comfort, beyond a certain limit, ceases to be a source of joy and well-being, and becomes a veritable bondage for the individual. Fortunately, the idea is growing among the civilized peoples of the world that no group of human beings can be happy, however wealthy they may happen to be, if the standard of living of the majority of people in the rest of the world is miserably low. We have to swim or sink together. Each

individual is, more or less, like every other individual in respect of his feelings, desires and emotions. The *Gītā* wants us to realize not only that our interests and desires are identical but also that there is really the same Ātmā in all apparently separate individuals. The same universal consciousness pervades every unit of humanity, just as the same life pulsates through the various branches and leaves of a tree. In doing good to others one is really doing good to himself. Realize the sameness of the Ātmā in all human beings and behave towards others as if they were yourselves. This is the message of the *Gītā* for every civilized human being.

"The yogi (the elevated soul) sees the Self abiding in all beings and all beings in the Self. Everywhere he percieves the same.

He, who sees me in every one and everyone in me ; to him I am never lost nor is he lost to me.

The devotee, who worships me abiding in all beings, holding that all is one lives in me however he may be living." (VI. 29-31).

All virtues necessarily follow from the realisation of oneness in all beings. Such a person is kind and compassionate and takes pleasure in doing good to others. He is always truthful and cannot think of deceiving any one or hurting anybody's feelings. "The man who, for his own benefit, injures other persons who also desire happiness like himself, does not obtain any happiness." (*Dhammpada.* 131)

In *suttanipāta* another buddhist text, occurs the following :—

"As I am, so are they ; as they are, so am I. Taking a clue from one's ownself, one should not cause the death of any body." (Nālaka sutta, 27.) The Biblical commandment, "love thy neighbour as thyself," enunciates the same principle. The *Gītā* gives a philosophical explanation of these well-known sayings by stating that the same Ātma resides in all beings.

The civilization of a country is not to be judged by its high standard of living alone—by its technological advances, and its great economic and political institutions ; it is to be judged also by its conception and practice of human relationships. Judged by this standard, the present material civilization, as it has developed in many countries in the East and the West, is very faulty. Its conception of human brotherhood is narrow. It does not see in every human being a similar soul as in other human beings. It distinguishes between white and coloured peoples and between the people of one country and those of another. Thus *Bhagawad Gītā* proclaims the unity of all man-kind. A Yogi or a really civilized person is one who sees the same humanity in all mankind, to whatever region they might belong, and whatever be their creed or the colour of their skin.

And religion also is to be judged by the same standard. External rites and ceremonies are mere empty meaningless husks, if they do not enshrine within

themselves the spirit of love and compassion. For centuries Hinduism has remained a structure of external respectability and inner corruption and decay. It has given shelter to all sorts of anti-social evils and moral sins. It ceased to care for the inner life of an individual provided he gave ample charities to religious institutions and to the custodians of those institutions. The religious leaders everywhere have, as a rule, been accused of taking sides with the political powers of their time and blessing every legal or illegal action emanating from them. They have not stood by the poor and the down-trodden as they should have done. There is no wonder that religion has lost all charm and has come to be regarded as an exploiting agency, keeping ignorant men in subjection to the rich and powerful classes. Religion is a great purifying force in the life of man, but it should be a genuine thing and not merely an imitation article. This is the religion of love and humanitarianism which the *Gītā* preaches and only this kind of religion can lift man to a higher level. Service of man and worship of God are to go together. It is no true worship if the element of service or sacrifice is lacking in it. "One who enjoys the gifts of God without giving anything in return is a thief", says the *Gītā* (III. 12) "The good man who eats of what is left after the sacrifice is released from all sins. But the unrighteous one who prepares food for himself alone incurs sin." (III. 13) Whatever be the external forms of different religious creeds, love

of humanity should be a common factor of all of them.

Faith and Life

Behind every religion there is faith in the Divine being or, as in early Buddhism, in the law of righteousness. There is no religion without this faith. This is what is really meant when it is said that God exists. It amounts to saying that there is more in the world than appears on the surface ; Or as James says, there is an ideal tendency in things which makes for the gradual emergence of moral, religious and aesthetic values. We may speak of it as an 'indwelling spiritual presence' or as 'a creative, organising and perfecting power' leading the world to higher and higher manifestations.

This faith appears to us to be quite rational, taking in view the fact that actually there has taken place an evolution towards higher categories of being in the order of matter, life, mind and further developments in the category of mind itself. It is, in any case, much more rational than the opposite belief that the world with all its lower and higher manifestations is a chance product of accidental collocation of lifeless atoms in the hoary past, and will one-day explode into nothingness, to resume the state as it was in the beginning.

We can not go far in life without faith. Even a scientist has faith in the uniformity of nature. He believes that things will behave in the future as they have behaved in the past and he builds the structure

of his knowledge on this underlying faith. The man of religion goes further and says that there is a reason for uniformity and orderliness in nature. The world is not the arena of irrational forces ; there is in it an inner guiding urge determining the direction of evolution and the orderliness of its happenings. That inner guiding urge manifests itself as the experience of cosmic consciousness in great mystics. This is so far as we know, the highest manifestation of God, other manifestations, according to the *Gītā*, being equally divine but of a lower rank. Faith is indispensable for the life of man. It keeps us going in the midst of all sorts of mishaps and rebuffs. "A number of actions do not bear immediate results. We are very often baffled by extra-ordinary events which make us even doubt whether there is the rule of law and justice in the natural world. It is here that faith comes in and buoys us up and helps us to retain our conviction in the moral government of the world.*

The greatest stumbling block in the way of faith is the presence of evil in various forms. The *Gītā* does not deny the element of evil in the make-up of the world, but it does not give it the dominating position either. Evil has its own part to play in the drama of existence, but its destiny is to ultimately succumb to the superior forces of goodness. It may grow to a certain position of strength, but very soon

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*H. V. Divatia, *The Art of Life in the Bhagawad Gītā*, 133-134.

the opposite forces appear, which bring about its downfall. This point of view is expressed in the *Gītā* in the form of the theory of Avatāra which, rightly interpreted, means the final triumph of good ever evil. "Whenever there is a decline of righteousness and ascendency of evil, I appear in the world for the protection of the good and the destruction of the evil." Thus the triumph of evil, according to *Gītā*, is only short-lived. Ultimately, it is destroyed by the principle of righteousness. The doctrine of Avatāra, therefore. implies the descent of God or spiritual force for the destruction of evil. "It is only a metaphorical descent. Really it is the universal soul which is released from its dormancy by forces opposing the evil, that bursts forth and sets aright the equilibrium between good and evil. ... ...The spirit of the age, as we call it, is incarnated in a human soul to such an extra ordinary degree that it is nearer the divine force that any other. Such a soul through which the divine element is revealed to us guides and inspires us to develop our strength to subjugate the forces of evil."*

The modern man will have to recover his lost faith in the Divine principle of the universe, if he is to get the utmost joy and usefulness out of his life. The loss of faith in the Divine has led, as its natural consequence, to the loss of faith in higher values of life. We find on all sides, in the modern age, a craving for the pleasures of life. That leads to competition for the

**Ibid* PP. 135-36.

acquisition of wealth and political power. Economic and political values have become the dominating values in the modern world. The great man of our times is the one who owns great wealth or wields great political power over the destinies of his fellow-men. We are living in a topsy-turvy world. The cultural values which should have occupied the front rank, have gone to the back ground. The *Gītā*, of course, is not against the joys of life nor does it inculcate renunciation of the world, but it certainly asks us to cultivate an attitude of non-attachment towards the non-essential things of life. There are so many things of luxury and enjoyment around us, that we have become virtually their slaves and the task of detachment from them has become extremely hard; but in order to have a proper perspective, we shall have to learn to live a life of simplicity in the midst of plenty. Excessive addictedness to pleasure would lead to the softening of our moral fibre and make us unfit for the higher things of life. But the attraction for pleasure of the senses can only go, if cultural values gain prominence in our life. "The clinging to sense pleasures is got rid of after one has seen the highest or the supreme (Parama)." (II. 59). The supreme is the embodiment of higher values. When we have experienced the joy of higher values, interest in lower pleasures automatically drops away. There is, in every man, an urge for the higher things of life—truth, love, beauty and goodness—but the urge has to be strengthened by regular practice so that it

may become supreme and dominant over animal cravings. The crying need of modern humanity is education in the higher life, without which the great problems by which we are faced and which appear to be extremely baffling will remain unsolved.

Going Beyond

While there are clear indications in the *Bhagawad Gītā* of the importance of participating in the activities of the world, we do not find in it the note of joyousness which characterised the thinkers of the Vedic age. The world is a place of joy and beauty inspite of all the woes and tribulations through which we have to pass. We long for life, for greater and fuller life, and welcome even the worst hazards in order to achieve our cherished goals. People, inspired by great ideals, love to engage themselves in all sorts of risky adventures, and greater the risk the greater is the satisfaction which they get out of them. It is only the weaker brethern, leading more or less an isolated existence out of contact with palpitating concrete realities, who generally bemoan the evils of life. It is a moot question whether the world would be worth living in, if it were emptied of all risks and hardships.

The *Gītā,* no doubt, raises its voice against the tendency to lead a life of renunciation. It calls upon all persons to fulful, in a spirit of detachment, their prescribed duties, and not to run away from them under the delusion that they would attain, thereby, deliverance from the ills of life. But the ultimate

goal of life is still held to be to get out of the Sansāra of births and deaths, and to find rest in the bosom of the absolute. "The great souls, having attained supreme perfection, and living constantly in me, are no longer subjected to rebirth which is the abode of sorrow and is of transitory nature." (VIII 15). Again it is said that people having no faith in the Dharma do not attain to me and keep on coming again and again to this world of death" (IX 3). There is a fair scattering of verses in the *Bhagawad Gītā*, full of a deprecatory note in regard to earthly life. Coming again and again to the world is regarded as a great calamity and misfortune, and getting away from it, the last word of religious wisdom.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself, as we know from his life, lived a full and many-sided life, taking part in all joyful activities. But when we come down to the time when an effort was made to reduce his teaching to writing and the *Gītā* was actually composed, a change seems to have come in the outlook of the wise men of the age. We now find a tendency to regard the activities of life as barriers in the quest of eternal happiness. Though the author of the *Gītā* enters a strong protest against the ever-increasing emphasis on renunciation met with in the views of the thinkers of the age, he does not himself show the same enthusiasm for the values of earthly life as we find in the Vedic seers and sages. With our forefathers of the Vedic age, religion did not mean looking up to heaven beyond the earth, but in creating a heaven on the earth. In

the post-Buddhist period and even some time before that, this conception of religion was lost and it became, more or less, an other-worldly thing. The malady of pessimism has continued to infect the people of India down to comparatively recent times. The darkness becomes thicker during the medieval period. The life in the world loses value, and the objective held before people is to realise the futility of worldly pursuits of all kinds and to depart from them as gracefully as possible. The abnormally large number of mendicants, found in all parts of India, is a concrete manifestation of this world-renouncing tendency.

The *Gītā* teaches the co-existence of God and his appearances in a manifest or latent form. But the obvious corollary from this doctrine was not drawn; namely that the manifestations are also divine and therefore worthy of our study and consideration. It was left to the impact of the virile culture of the West in the 19th century and to the simultaneous appearance on the soil of this ancient land, of a number of great religious and social reformers, to bring home again to the people the joyful and spiritual character of worldly activities, if rightly performed. We find Rājā Rām Mohan Roy, Swāmi Dayānand, Swami Vivekānand, Rabinder Nath Tagore, Śrī Aurobindo, Mahātamā Gāndhi, Prof. Radha Krishanan and other great men of modern India, laying proper emphasis on the worldly as well as spiritual values of life. Swami Vivekānand referred again and again, in his inspiring talks and writings, to the paramount

necessity of improving the economic and social standards of the people as a preliminary to their spiritual elevation. Religious truth can properly appeal to those people who possess healthy bodies and well-filled stomachs. Spirituality and starvation ill go together. Śri Aurobindo similarly laid an equal emphasis on the integral vision of life and on the necessity of participating in joy and Ānand which are an important aspect of creation.

Mahātama Gāndhi, an intensly religious man living a life of extreme simplicity, spent his life-time in the struggle for political emancipation and for raising the economic standard of the common man. Modern India is following his foot-steps in devising and implementing various schemes for the economic and social up-liftment of the people of India.

These great men had greatly benefited from western education and were well-read in Western philosophy and literature. They were influenced by the writers and thinkers of the West. Swāmi Dayānand, on the other hand, was perhaps the only great reformer of modern India who drew his inspiration entirely from ancient Indian wisdom. He had no knowledge of English, but he was a great Sanskrit scholar. His knowledge of all phases of Indian culture was profound. In the course of his study of Indian culture, when he came to the phase represented by the Vedic period, he found, to his surprise and delight, that Indians of the Vedic age, though devoutly religious and highly moral in their daily life.

nevertheless led a rich and full-blooded existence. Though they were an intensly religous people, they did not condemn nor were they averse to the enjoyment of innocent pleasures of life. Swāmi Dayānand dedicated his life to the spread of this great message of the ancient Aryan thinkers amongst the people of this country.

He exhorted them, with great zeal and earnestness, to bring back to life this lost vision and to live again as their ancestors, the ancient Aryans did. There is no doubt that the teaching of Swāmi Dayānand had a revolutionary effect on the mind of the people of India and turned their thoughts, to a large extent, away from the futile doctrine of renunciation and towards the pursuit of the goal of a well-integrated life. The world was not to be shunned and despised. The philosophy of renunciation which regards the world as an abode of sorrow, is the philosophy of a tired and discouraged people.

Dr. Radha Krishanan has dwelt on this aspect of life again and again in his speeches and writings. "Withdrawal is not the whole of the religious tradition", says Sir Radha Krishanan "there is also participation, enjoyment. The *Iśopaniṣad* asks us to enjoy by renouncing. It is a deep and disinterested acceptance of the world and joyful recognition that no part of it may be refused."* At another place, he says that the liberated soul does not lose its individuality;

**Idealistic view of Life*, p. 114.

only its communion with God, which at the empirical level was transitory and intermittent, becomes on attaining perfection 'continuous, permanent and unclouded.' The liberated soul continues to be the centre of action as long as the cosmic process continues. "The loss of individuality happens only when the world is redeemed......the freed soul so long as the cosmic process continues, participates in it and returns to embodied existence not for its own sake but for the sake of the whole. He has the feeling of kinship with all (Sarvātma Bhāva). He identifies himself with the universal movement and follows its course."*

This is undoubtedly a refreshing note which we find in the writings of our modern thinkers and wise-men. It amounts to bringing heaven down to the earth. Our spiritual gaze which, for centuries, had been fixed on the supra-terrestrial plane for the attainment of happiness, is now brought back to the earth, to find here the medium for the realisation of values which have inspired mankind through the ages. The Divine manifests himself on the earth as anywhere else. We can therefore give full scope to all our spiritual aspirations, while taking our proper share in the activities of the world. The world is a place of joy and beauty, and is a divine manifestation. There are evils in it, but they are to be conquered and transformed. It is through the conquest of evils that we can obtain a richer and profounder vision of life.

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*Ibid. 303.

Along with the glorification of the earth, the body of man is coming to be regarded as the temple of the soul, instead of being a house of temptation or an unavoidable impediment in the way of perfection, which it had long been supposed to be. It is through the bodily senses that we get the knowledge of the world and of ourselves too. Our ideas and thoughts, our emotions and aspirations, all depend upon the proper functioning of the brain, the nervous system, the endocrine system and other parts of the body. If the brain were to get out of order, even the most renowned philosopher would begin to blab like an idiot. It is through the body that we experience pain and pleasure, love and compassion and all other emotions of spirituality. Thus our experience of spiritual values ultimately depends upon the body and its internal secretions. Our body, therefore, is not a prison house of the soul but an indispensable instrument for its evolution through various stages of life.

It is a happy thing that we are moving away from the dismal view of life to its vigorous re-affirmation. The *Gītā* inherited the tradition that the world is an abode of sorrows and left it at that, but its philosophy of action and its doctrine of divine manifestation in all events and happenings are pointers in the direction of a changed conception of the world. The great spiritual truths which the *Gītā* imparts to us and which will continue shedding their lustre upon the life of man for all time to come, can be more easily

grasped on the basis of this new vision of life. It brings us very near to the view of our Vedic ancestors, though greatly enriched and amplified by later development in philosophy and religion. The world, instead of being dismissed as an abode of sorrow, is to be made, in all respects, into a place for the gods to live in. If the Supreme being continuously takes delight in the world of His creation, why should a delivered soul find it a torment to be born again and again in the world for its redemption, Sri Aurobindo expresses this view as follows : "Having realized his own immortality the individual has yet to fulfil God's work in the universe. He has to help the life, the mind, and the body in all beings to express progressively immortality and not mortality......Birth in the body is the most close, divine and effective form of help which the liberated can give to those who are themselves still bound to the progression of birth in the lowest world of ignorance."* The same idea is expressed in a novel of Somerset Maugham. The hero of the novel received his training in Yoga from a great master in India and attained, as a consequence, to a high degree of spiritual ecstasy. While talking of his yogic experience, he says, "I felt in myself an energy that cried out to be expended. It was not for me to leave the world and retire to the cloister but to live in the world and love the objects of the world, not indeed for themselves, but for the Infinite in them. If in those moments of ecstasy, I had indeed been one

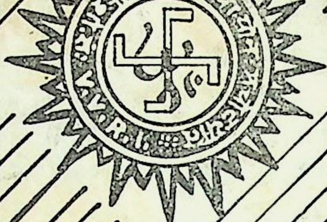
*Isho. Up. p. 101.

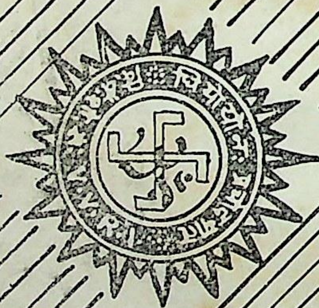
with the Absolute, then, if what they (The Indian masters) said was true, nothing could touch me, and when I had worked out the Karma of my present life, I should return no more. The thought filled me with dismay. I wanted to live again and again. I was willing to accept every sort of life, no matter what its pain and sorrow. I felt that only life after life, life after life would satisfy my eagerness, my vigour and my curosity."*

We are liberated or bound not by what we do but how we do it ; and so the liberated person can serve as the best guide for erring humanity. It would be really unfortunate if a soul which reaches the height of perfection is taken away from the scene of its work to lead a blissful life of perpetual inactivity. So when Prof. Radha Krishanan says, that a liberated soul would continue its labour of love in life after life till all living beings are redeemed, he strikes a new note in keeping with the spirit of the time. Swāmi Dayānand similarly, before Dr. Radha Krishanan, expressed dis-satisfaction with the idea of everlasting absorption of the emancipated soul in the Brahman, and its complete loss of individuality. He held, instead, the view that such a soul after having spent a long time in perfect repose and bliss returns to the world to take part in its activities. Mukti, in his view, is only a temporary retirement from work. The delivered soul makes its appearance again and again in

*The Razor's Edge. Ch. VI.

the world, if it can, thereby, bring comfort and hope in the lives of struggling human beings. When its presence in the world is no longer necessary, it may find repose and rest in the infinity of All-being. These are, of course, mostly speculations, but they point to a great revolution which is taking place in modern Hindu thought. The world is no longer looked upon as a place of sorrow, but as a place which provides never-ending vistas of beauty and joy and opportunities for moral endeavour. This is really a welcome change in the conception of life in modern Hinduism.





V.R.I.